Vol. 1 - No. 4 • March, 1936

FEDERAL THEATRE

THE LIBRARY OF THE
NOV 16 1950
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

Works Progress Administration

Return this book on or before the
Latest Date stamped below.

Theft, mutilation, and underlining of books are reasons for disciplinary action and may result in dismissal from the University.

University of Illinois Library

APR 27 1967

L161—O-1096

THIS ISSUE

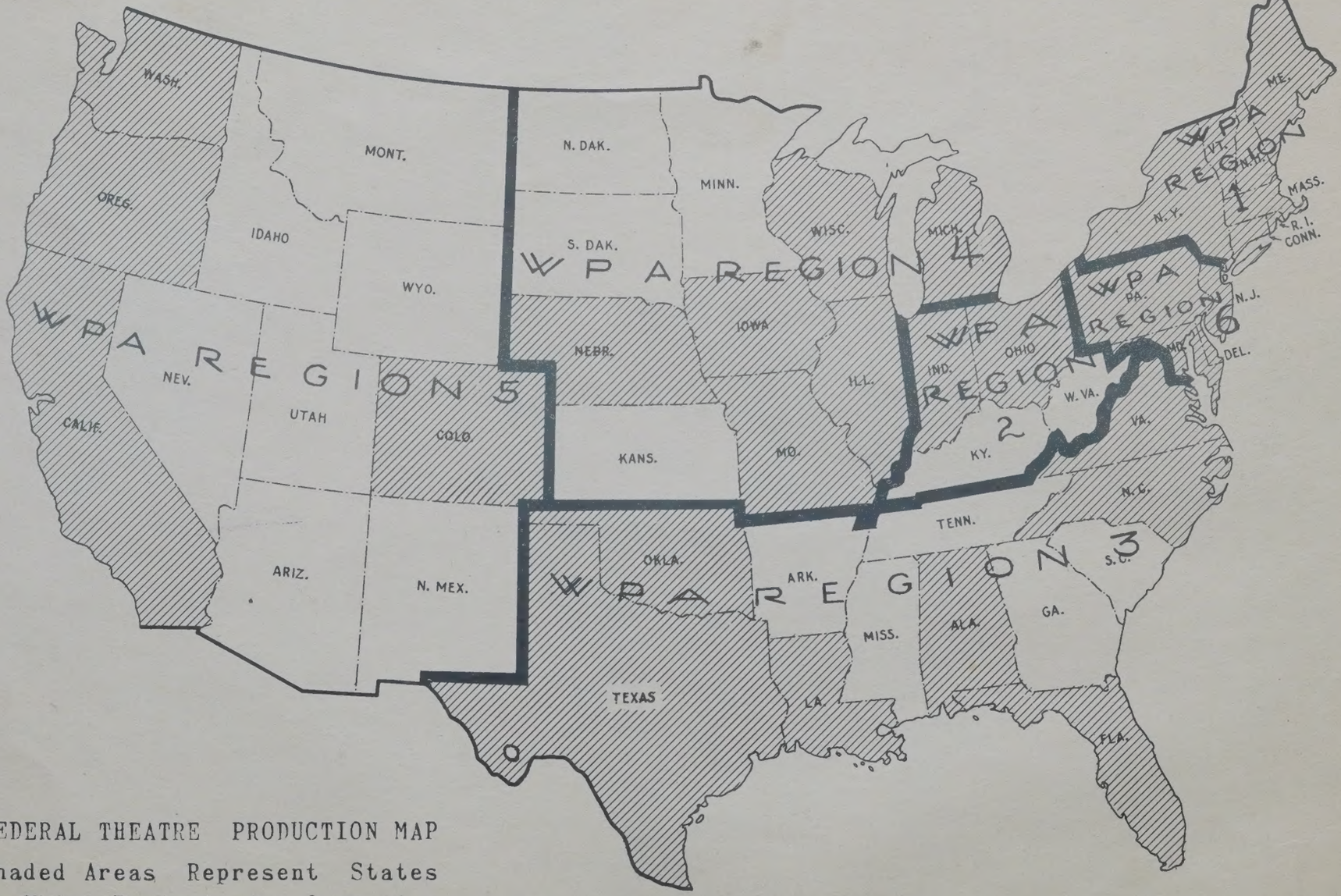
IS PUBLISHED ESPECIALLY FOR

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATORS

IN WASHINGTON

AND IN THE FIELD

This booklet was produced entirely without type by Federal Theatre Workers. Composed on the Vari-typer and printed on a Multilith machine presented for this purpose by the Rockefeller Foundation.



FEDERAL THEATRE PRODUCTION MAP

Shaded Areas Represent States
In Which Projects Are Operating

792.05
FE
v.1
w.4-6

FEDERAL THEATRE

Monthly News Bulletin Issued for All Workers on Federal Theatre Projects Throughout America by the Bureau of Research and Publication, Rosamond Gilder, Director.

Edited by Pierre de Rohan

March, 1936 | *303 West 42nd Street, New York* | *Vol.1, No.4*

A Report of the First Six Months

By HALLIE FLANAGAN

National Director, Federal Theatre Projects

"The keenest privation of the unemployed artist is the lack of professional expression"---Brooks Atkinson, commenting on a Federal Theatre production, *New York Times* January 25, 1936.

■

■ Ten thousand seven hundred theatre workers throughout the United States in the past six months have gone back to work in the professions for which they were trained. This number includes actors, directors, draftsmen, dramatists, scene designers, costume designers, research workers, dancers, teachers, stage managers, stage carpenters, stage electricians, stage-hands, play readers, box office men, property men, bookers and ushers, as well as the office and maintenance workers necessary for theatre production.

Unlike painters, sculptors, writers, and, for the most part, musicians, no one of the above categories of theatre workers can function without cooperation from all the other various groups. Consequently, the primary necessity in setting up the Federal Theatre Project was that of ascertaining where these various skills were, and of bringing them together in the right proportion to form effective producing units.

In this preliminary organization the Federal Theatre Project benefited by the work done by various drama units set up by Mr. Harry Hopkins in 1934 under the Civil Works Administration. This movement to regard artists as people, and art skills as worthy of conservation, received further impetus when $27,000,000 of the $4,800,000,000 made available by the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935 was set aside for the four arts; in October, $6,784,036, based on the estimated amount of theatrical unemployment, was allotted to the theatre. With this definite knowledge of the amount to be spent, representatives of the Federal Theatre director throughout the country, in cooperation with local Works Progress Administration offices and with the United States Employment Service, set up classification boards, auditioned theatre personnel and started theatre groups.

In thirty-one states, theatrical unemployment existed to such an extent that projects were set up in cities and towns in Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Virginia, North Carolina, Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, Arkansas, Ohio, Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Texas, Colorado, Washington, Oregon, California, and Washington, D. C.

In many of these states, of course, there are a number of projects: New York City, with 5000 on the payroll, has 31 producing units, operating as 49 performing groups; California, with 1680 on the payroll, has 32 producing units; Boston 33; Chicago 14; Seattle 5; Philadelphia 3; Cleveland 4; St. Louis, Dallas, and Manchester, N.H., two each. Other states in which five or more projects are located are Connecticut, Florida, New York and New Jersey.

In seventeen of the forty-eight states auditions showed practically no theatre unemployment, hence, for the present, there is no Federal Theatre Project in Vermont, Maryland, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, South Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi, North Dakota, South Dakota, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, Wyo-

ming, Idaho, and Montana. In certain other states theatre unemployment was limited to 10 - 35 people and in such cases the attempt is to place them in Recreation or Adult Education programs. Eventually it is hoped that, through touring units, and resident groups moved from large cities, all states can share in the Federal Theatre Project.

Any theatre organization, however, is not only complex within itself, but bound up with many highly organized theatrical unions such as Actors Equity, The American Federation of Actors, the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees with its many locals, the Union of Wardrobe Mistresses, the Union of Electrical Engineers, the Union of Scenic Designers, and others.

A series of conferences extending over many months has resulted in friendly cooperation from these unions, a cooperation based on their realization that while we cannot run a closed shop, since our job is to employ people on the basis of need as well as of excellence, still our aim is a mutual one - work for workers under the best possible conditions.

The organization of the Federal Theatre Project is now completed. The national director in Washington works through five assistant directors, each responsible for all the theatre units in his territory, consisting of a number of states; reporting to these assistant directors are state directors, when the number of producing units justifies it, and project supervisors in charge of the theatrical groups. All Federal Theatre projects are responsible, through the director of the Federal Theatre in Washington, to the director of Professional and Service Projects, of which the four arts projects make up one unit under the Works Progress Administration.

While the imaginative direction of the theatre people engaged in administrative positions is important in shaping policies of the Federal Theatre, its validity and significance rests on the talent, experience and enthusiasm in the ranks of the unemployed. Nine out of ten of the workers on the project, except when a 25% non-relief exemption is granted for the unit, come from the relief rolls as of November 1, 1935; but from the time these workers come on the project the relief element ceases to be uppermost, and the emphasis is on an attempt to create theatre units which have enough relationship to the tempo and temper of our time to make some contribution to the various communities in which they are organized, and thus to continue to function after the initial federal plan is completed.

No one who has seen these thousands of theatre workers rehearsing in barns, lofts and studios, spending far more than the required hours, working with energy and devotion to re-learn the exacting techniques of the stage, can believe that the Federal Theatre as it gathers momentum will be any the less potent because it has the remembrance of hunger in the pit of its stomach.

THE PLAYS

"Building a $1,000,000 waterway, or revolutionizing life in the Tennessee Valley are comparatively simple (Sic!). Even developing an efficient tap dancer is not so hopelessly complicated. But making a Eugene O'Neill is something else again."--William F. McDermott, commenting on the Federal Theatre Project in *The Plain Dealer* of Cleveland, Ohio, a few weeks ago.

Perhaps it is a sense of the astuteness of Mr. McDermott's observation that has led to the fact that so far the majority of plays planned for and produced on federal stages are from the classics and from nineteenth and twentieth century *Americana*.

Shakespeare is represented with *Macbeth*, *A Comedy of Errors*, *King Lear*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *Hamlet*. Ibsen productions include *The Wild Duck*, *Peer Gynt*, *An Enemy of the People*, and *The Master Builder*. Euripides is represented with *The Cyclops*, Moliere with *The School for Wives*, Gilbert and Sullivan with *The Pirates of Penzance* and *The Mikado*, Beaumont and Fletcher with *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, Shaw with *Great Catherine* and *Androcles and the Lion*, and Oscar Wilde with *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

Dramas which have played a part in American theatrical history are popular, Chicago and California each having one unit devotes exclusively to the production

Not Broadway, but a scene outside a Federal Theatre in Los Angeles thirty minutes before curtain time.

of such theatrical milestones as *Under Two Flags, Shenandoah, The Texas Steer, The Old Homestead, The Silver King, The Octoroon, Our American Cousin, Secret Service, The Tavern,* and *Human Hearts.* These plays are produced by older actors, trained in an earlier tradition of acting, in some cases playing in the dramas which originally made them famous. The intent is to produce these plays not as comic revivals, but in a manner designed to convey to a modern audience the values which made them favorites with an earlier generation.

Plays of our own times in production or in rehearsal include: *Green Grow the Lilacs, Coquette, Post Road, The Old Maid, Hell Bent for Heaven, As Husbands Go, Outward Bound, The Good Hope, House of Seven Gables, One Sunday Afternoon, Jayhawker, Journey's End, The Virginian, Wappen Wharf, The Ship, Criminal at Large ,* and *Liliom.*

Certain areas are playing up their local dramatists': Indiana offers *The Hoosier Schoolmaster* and plays by Booth Tarkington; New England is producing *Valley Forge* and *Barbara Frietchie;* Oakland, California, is doing a weekly *commedia dell' arte* sketch on some phase of California history, with the intention of evolving a play on California. One of the most interesting of the Pennsylvania units is working on dramatic material from Pennsylvania Dutch folklore. At Manteo, on Roanoke Island in Dare County, North Carolina, there is being organized a project to assist in the creating of a permanent playing company for Roanoke Island, the repertory of which will include plays depicting the historical and legendary material of Dare County.

Racial groups are doing plays of their own literatures': Negro companies in Seattle, Los Angeles, New York and Chicago are offering: *Porgy, Walk Together Chillun* (new); *Brother Mose; Black Empire* (new); and *Conjure Man Dies* (new); also Negro vaudeville, and *Macbeth* with the scene laid in Haiti, the witch scenes played as voodoo. The Yiddish group in California is doing *Uriel Acosta;* the New York Anglo-Jewish group opened with *The Idle Inn,* a new translation of a Jewish classic; the Cuban group in Florida offers a Cuban revue; the Florida Italian group is in rehearsal on Italian opera; the German group is opening in *Der Zerbrockene Krug.*

One basic aim of the Federal Theatre Project is to offer a chance for production to unknown dramatists. The New York Federal Theatre to date has given premieres of the following plays: *American Holiday,* by Edwin L. and Albert Barker; *Chalk Dust,* by Harold Clarke and Maxwell Nurnberg; *Jefferson Davis,* by John McGee; *Woman of Destiny,* by Samuel Jesse Warshaw-

sky; *Walk Together, Chillun;* by Frank Wilson; and has in preparation *In Heaven and Earth,* by Edward Pizet and Arthur Goodman, and *Top Dog,* by Georgette Carneal and Burnet Hershey. California has accepted for production the following new scripts: *Backstage,* by Andre Rouvernol; *Censored* and *Charlotte Corday,* by Conrad Seiler; *The Ruling Passion* by Charles Thomas; and *The Enchantress,* by C. C. Parsons.

While we agree with Mr. McDermott that it is highly optimistic to believe that the Federal Theatre can develop a flock of playwrights within six months, still we believe that one function of any living theatre is to try to create plays: therefore, we are glad to report that a number of American plays are now being written on the project: *Samuel Adams,* by Robert Allen of the Boston project; *Davy Crockett* by John Lyman, on the New York project; *This is My Country,* a study of the Alamo and its relation to Texan independence, by the staff of our Texas theatre unit; *Big Top,* written and produced by a Federal Theatre group in Cleveland; *Cho Cho,* a play about America's famous clown, by a unit in Oakland, California. Historical material for the Arkansas Centennial is now being drawn up.

Training for the playwright was the starting point of the *Living Newspaper,* a New York theatre unit engaged in portrayal of the news of the day, by writers who are attempting to dramatize salient situations objectively. *Triple A Ploughed Under* attempts to make the farm situation graphic to the casual New Yorker, who sees little of interest in rural matters; *Crime,* while dealing with various topical expressions of that lurid subject, also shows scenes of youth in the streets to illustrate how crime is bred. Cleveland also has a Living Newspaper project, opening in a series of short subjects.

It will be noted that there is decided emphasis, particularly in the new plays being written by individuals or groups, on American material. This seems to come about naturally, but it is also a definite policy of the Federal Theatre Project to encourage a study of the little-explored American scene, past and present.

■ THE PRODUCTION PLAN

"Art must always be functional, especially the art of the theatre. When it ceases to perform some useful function it becomes the show business. Even that business, however, is preferable to the art-for-art's-sake theory, which belonged to an era definitely ended and best forgotten. Above and beyond these considerations, however, the Federal Theatre should be causal as well as functional for the very vital reason that those of us engaged in it are both victims and protagonists." - Michael Garnett, in an article for *Federal Theatre.*

The Federal Theatre Project, emerging because of an economic necessity, unemployment, is faced at once with another economic necessity - that of using a less expensive, though not necessarily less potent theatre language than that usually employed commercially. Ninety per cent of the funds for the theatre project go for labor costs, wages for workers. The remaining ten per cent may go for production. This lack of money for production demands a new theatre vocabulary: writers, actors and designers must try for a rapid, simplified, and vivid form of stage expression.

Certain groups are engaged in such experimentation, though only in the beginning stages: the Living Newspaper, the Southern California Experimental Theatre, the Philadelphia Manionettes. The Poetic Theatre in New York, working on W. H. Auden's *Dance of Death,* with a new musical score by Clair Leonard, is using patterned movement and choric speech instead of elaborate scenery and costume changes. The Dallas, Texas, group is offering as its first production a new play, *The Wall* by Ross Lawler, which is, according to the Dallas *Morning News* of March 4, 1936, "Symphony in motion, speech and music, calling for abstract stage forms, a speaking chorus, and a kaleidoscopic orchestral score by Curtis Somer-Peck."

Experiments on Federal Theatre stages should not be based upon a desire to be different. If so, they will be and deserve to be caviar to the general. Our experimentation should be motivated not

by an art theory, but by an attempt to see whether we can, with very little money, produce plays of authentic material in ways interesting to a modern audience.

It is the opinion of the director of the Federal Theatre that our experiments in both writing and production are decidedly too timid. I quote from a criticism of our present productions, sent me by a worker on our New York Project, with whom I find myself in agreement. He criticizes the "neo-Belasco realism" of our conventional productions, and the "pseudo-*Cavalcade* technique" of our more experimental groups, and goes on with words which I hope he will not mind having me quote:

"Our dramatists, designers, and our directors are missing an opportunity. A changing world that takes in its stride old-age pensions, employment insurance, child labor legislation, amateur hours, Alaskan colonization, dance marathons, bank-deposit insurance, the vast field of scientific achievement, and government development of power, is rich in material for a theatre which is alive to its functional responsibilities.

"As for form there are whole brackets as yet untested. Keeping in mind always the primary constant, that a functional theatre must give expression to fundamental human experiences and answer a fundamental human need, then the resourceful playwritht or director can turn in almost any direction and find suggestions for new and effective treatments.

"There are, as convenient examples, the newer expressions in architecture, the newsreels, the exhibitions of contemporary paintings and sculpture, the splendid new murals being done by WPA artists for public buildings, new music and dance forms, radio and television techniques, and a thousand other manifestations of present-day living and thinking. From all these the alert director of a modern theatre may draw inspiration, ideas, and concrete patterns."

VAUDEVILLE

"Vaudeville business is getting bigger every year. But it is a new kind of vaudeville, with new outlets. That means it needs new routines and new ideas."--T. D. Senna - Massachusetts State Supervisor of Vaudeville.

Vaudeville units were among the first Federal Theatre units to get under way, and have been in active operation, playing to large audiences continuously since the days of the C.W.A. theatre units. There is an extensive New England circuit, a Chicago Park circuit, a greater New York circuit, and other units in every state where a theatre project is in operation.

The vaudeville units play chiefly in CCC and transient camps, in underprivilege CCC and transient camps, in underprivileged districts, in state institutions such as hospitals, prisons, reformatories and asylums for the young and the old. In one state alone (Massachusetts) between 70 and 80 such free performances are given each week. Not enough has been written about the important social service which the government is performing in thus bringing

Oakland, California, group rehearsing for performance of "Gobs," musical novelty

entertainment to the wards of the community. Many hundreds of letters from the superintendents of these institutions testify that entertainment of professional quality is most important in maintaining the discipline and morale of those living in them, in many cases (reformatories and hospitals for nervous diseases) materially aiding in rehabilitation.

Vaudeville presents one of the most interesting and difficult fields of production, for we have a great number of vaudevillians on our project, many of them skilled, but most of them in agreement that we need new ideas to employ these particular techniques. These new ideas are forthcoming chiefly from the vaudeville units themselves. Los Angeles has a unit working on a long play employing the varied skills of acrobatics, dance, and song; Pennsylvania is trying a miniature three-ring circus effect, with simultaneous acts, with a point-counter-point of sound, color, and movement. The Children's Theatre Group in New York is in rehearsal with an original vaudeville play by Dorothy Hailpern, which is to be done as a curtain raiser for *The Emperor's New Clothes*.

Vaudeville is not dead, as many have claimed, Rather it is flowing into new channels, and the demand for performers is on the increase. But new forms and fresh ideas are needed, and *Federal Theatre* urges vaudeville directors to meet this need.

CIRCUS

"From the grand march at the start, which was followed closely by Billy Rohde's Hollywood dogs and especially his high-diving pup, Blackberry-- fifteen feet into a fireman's net--on through the evening to the grand finale, featuring little Ann Howe's 'slide for life,' the show was a great success."--The New York *Times*, commenting on the Federal Theatre Circus, November 1,1935.

Youth without the circus is inconceivable, and we are glad to report that 86,625 persons, in hospitals and other institutions, about 60% of them children, saw our New York Federal Theatre Circus at 57 performances between October 17 and February 1.

This unit, the nucleus of which was inherited from C.W.A.has been playing steadily since last August to large audiences through greater New York. At first all of the productions were free; now that a small admission is charged there is no appreciable drop in attendance, for the sawdust circle, the mingled smell of animals and popcorn, the announcer with his high hat, boots and whip, the sad white smile of the clowns, the incredible trapeze artists--all of these, and the feelings they evoke, are at the very core of theatre.

MARIONETTES

"These dolls, because of their very limitations, may enact more poignantly the entire comedy and tragedy of the human race. Their field is as broad as life itself."--Anatole France

Original and amusing work is being done on marionette projects throughout the country: San Francisco has *Pierre Patelin, The Crock of Gold*, and *Puss in Boots;* Los Angeles, in a company billing itself as *Not Only for Children*, offers *Don Quixote*, and amazingly enough, *Genesis, Afrique, Cyclops*, and *Microbe Hunters*. New Jersey produces an original adaptation of *Aladdin*; an extravaganza *Happy Days at the Circus*; and an historical drama depicting the bravery of New Jersey's heroine, *Molly Pitcher*. New York City marionettes have extensive bookings for *The Circus, The Brass Trumpet, The World Trip, Punch & Judy, Mickey Mouse's Birthday, Wolf in the Woods, Treasure Island*, and *Sherlock Holmes*. Buffalo Negro marionettes play to large school and social settlement audiences in original historical plays; *Eli Whitney and the Cotton Gin, Rip Van Winkle, The National Anthem*, and *Nathan Hale*. Philadelphia marionettes jump from *Doctor Faustus* to *Hansel and Gretel*, and succeed in making *Little Black Sambo* the protagonist of modern social and economic ideas. This group cannot keep up with requests from schools, settlement houses and other organizations for its original plays on housing, crime prevention, and other modern themes. In Washington, D. C. an enthusiastic marionette group is not only working on actual productions, like *Hansel and Gretel*, which will be shown to various playground groups, but has also organized

and planned for Washington a large festival in which every marionette group, public and private, in the city is participating.

MOTION PICTURE DIVISION

"We who are interested in the education program of the camps in New York, New Jersey and Deleware, take the fundamental position that the motion picture is surprisingly powerful in affecting the information, attitudes, emotional experiences and conduct patterns, not only of children but of adolescents and adults." Harold L. Dunn, Educational Director, 2nd Corps Area CCC.

Since December ninth, the Motion Picture Division, which operates in connection with the Visual Education Instructors in CCC Camps, has reviewed and passed on many pictures for showings in camps, and has gathered and presented to the camps, historical, educational material in connection with the showing of certain of the pictures. Talks given prior to the showing of pictures include material for supplementary reading, and material for discussions and debates.

The pictures, secured by cooperation with a number of motion picture companies, are shown by motion picture operators on our Theatre Project, and are routed through eight circuits of 48 camps in the 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th districts of New York. Attendance up to March first was 31,512. Pictures include: *Count of Monte Cristo, Diamond Jim, One Night of Love, Les Miserables, Broadway Gondolier, Call of the Wild, Oil for the Lamps of China,* and *Transatlantic Tunnel.*

Educational pictures, supplied by the the U. S. Government departments and large industrial concerns, augment each film program and supplement the training of enrollees engaged on numerous projects such as forestry, soil erosion, road building, and other undertakings.

Cinema Clubs have been organized in the camps to aid those interested in the fundamentals of motion picture techniques and the essentials of photoplay appreciation. Practical classes in motion picture projection, which include electricity, optics, and sound, are also being formed.

Another series of films dealing with health and hygiene will also be shown. Lectures on these subjects to be used in a follow-up campaign are in the course of preparation.

THE DANCE GROUP

"What is regarded by New York dancers as the most important contribution to the pro the most important contribution to the progress of the dance as a part of the American culture pattern is seen in the beginning this month of the Dance Project of the Federal Theatre." - From *Dance Projects Started by W.P.A.* in *The American Dance* for March, 1936.

Productions now in rehearsal in the New York units include familiar material such as *Candide,* music by Wallingford Riegger, choreography by Charles Weidman; *The Prodigal Son,* music by Prokofieff, choregraphy by Gluck-Sandor; *Suite in F,* music by Elbert Ronssel, choreography by Doris Humphreys; *Walt Whitman Cycle;* music by Genevieve Pitot, choreography by Tamiris; *Tempo,* an American Jazz Ballet of a dance marathon, music by Herbert Kingsley, choreography by Gluck-Sandor.

A new production in rehearsal is *Young Tramps,* new musical score by Donald Pond, the theme based upon *Boy and Girl Tramps of America,* by Thomas Minehan. The choreographer, Don Oscar Becque, defines it as "a choreographic treatment of the wandering youth of America. The performing company is treated as a group, against the contrapuntal effects of solos, duets, and other combinations. The dancers are treated as a vital and moving line of action against inanimate cardboard cut-out figures, which represent the world from which the wandering youth is isolated."

Other dance groups are being formed in Chicago, Dallas, and New Orleans.

RESEARCH AND PUBLICATION

"The New York Public Library has publicly announced its approval and appreciation of the work being done by the Bureau of Research and Publication. The completely cross-indexed catalogues of plays, bibliographies, etc., being compiled for immediate use of FTP producers and directors,

LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

will continue to be of enormous value to theatre workers in the future."- News item in *Federal Theatre*, January, 1936.

The Bureau of Research and Publication is organized on a national basis, and, to quote from its own bulletin, has a threefold object:

"*First*: To give immediate information service to the Federal Theatre Projects in New York and throughout the country on plays, theatre books, scripts and so forth.

Second: to provide appropriate and constructive work for playwrights on the Federal Theatre Project.

Third: to carry out in the work itself certain definite research work which will be of permanent value to the theatre."

To meet a constant demand from nation-wide Federal units, research workers have drawn up, mimeographed, and distributed throughout the country the following lists:

Christmas Plays
Suggested repertory of Classic English Plays
Modern Continental Plays
American, English and Irish Plays
Children's Plays
Amateur Plays
Early American Plays (3)
Little Known One-Act Plays
Negro Plays
One-Act Negro Plays

Special research has also brought to light several scripts of unusual interest:

The Disappointment, or the Force of Credulity, the first comic opera to be produced in America (1767) (Contains sixteen songs, music for six of which has been found) This play is now being cast and will be produced as a joint project of music and theatre.

The Apostles, a German play, translated by a member of the Bureau's staff, in rehearsal by the New York German group.

Historical Vaudeville, (preparation of script and music)

The play rental service of the Bureau negotiates all play arrangements for the New York unit and gives information to the other units.

Three numbers of the mimeographed bulletin *Federal Theatre*, of which this is the fourth issue, have carried information on the various projects throughout the country, usually in the form of reports from various areas.

To date 445 plays have been submitted to the Bureau, read and reviewed by a staff of experienced play readers and playwrights. Lists of recommended plays are sent to all Federal Theatre Projects; directors of all units are urged to submit plays for nation-wide release; scripts by workers on any Federal Theatre Project are accorded the same analysis as that given plays from other sources. The work assigned to play readers and research workers is not so heavy as to forbid creative work on their own time, the plays so written remaining their own property.

The third objective of the Bureau, now well under way, is that of creating an extensive loose-leaf catalogue of plays, published and unpublished, representing the whole field of the theatre, with emphasis on American drama. This valuable collation, being done in cooperation with the New York Public Library, fits in with another project in research--that of a portfolio on *American Scene Design* to be carried out in cooperation with the Federal Art Project's *Index of American Design*. The object is to create a series of portfolio records of the history of scene design in America as an integral part of the general project on design now under way; the Bureau of Research and Publication to supply supervision and research workers; the Art Project to supply a camera man for photographing material as found, an artist to make drawings and color reproductions, wherever thid type of reproduction may be necessary. The research will be concentrated, during the next six weeks, on the American, or rather the New York, theatre, during the last quarter of the 19th century. Should the project be carried forward, the scope would be increased to include all American scene deeign and also costume design for the theatre.

RECREATION AND THE TEACHING OF THEATRE TECHNIQUE

"They all have a skill, these performers; they all belong in the theatre. The Government proposes to return them to it."-- Dorothy Coleman in *Old Time Troopers on Relief Rolls*, St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*, January 21, 1936.

As one of the chief aims of the Federal Theatre Project is to re-establish theatre workers in fields of usefulness, an important place of the work is the assignment of unemployed drama teachers to meet the constantly expanding needs of recreation programs. This increasing demand for leaders especially skilled in dramatic production indicates a chance of future absorption by recreational and leisure-time programs of many who have such professional training to contribute. The Federal Theatre Project, while well started towards a realization of the vast possibilities of this type of work, hopes to enlarge the scope of this phase of the program.

A typical report on the Federal Theatre Project's cooperation with Recreation Maitresse de Ballet, two dramatic teachers, and one assistant, have been assigned to the Dallas Recreational Department with headquarters at Fretz Park, where they are engaged in instructing Dallas school children in the art of marionette construction and the production of puppet and recreational plays."

In similar projects more than 700 professional theatre workers are contributed by the Federal Theatre Project to community drama and recreational drama programs in over 50 scattered cities and towns throughout the country. They aid and direct the technical development of non-professional and amateur groups, stimulating by their activity a higher quality of specialized dramatic work in every leisure time program with which they are cooperating.

The Studio Theatre of the New York project has as its purpose the retraining of professional theatre workers on our project, equipping them with the special knowledge and technique necessary for positions in the community drama field. The plan of operation is to draw a group of such teachers and directors in from field work in the several hundred institutions now given such service; to form them into a producing unit, in which for eight weeks they work out all phases of a production, under a skilled staff of directors. They then perform before actual audiences for two weeks, then give way to the next gru

group. Courses are offered in direction, technique of acting, speech, make-up, costume and scenic design (with emphasis on simplicity) and theory of community drama. I quote from their own outline:

"We propose to turn the director's mind toward the environmental and economic problems of his center and to stimulate the writing of new material by supplying a research worker who will compile case histories in dramatic form of the family and social problems of the neighborhood. These may be used for improvidations, and will, we hope, be of sufficient interest to stimulate young writers in that field.

"In this course, we will also train the director in a new understanding of his position as spokesman for the community and give him a greater appreciation of and a method for dealing with the psychological and emotional problems which he will meet.

"In connection with this department we suggest a course dealing with adolescent behavior, problems and parent-child relationships, plus a study of the forces active in community life."

Representative programs of this nature are found in:-

1) Connecticut - where a state-wide project for the teaching of theatre technique employs 27 people as drama coaches to direct amateur groups in various social institutions;
2) Chicago - where over 50 people are assigned to teach drama in the auditoriums and field houses of Chicago park districts;
3) North Carolina - where professional directors are assigned to community drama groups in the following cities and towns: Charlotte, Durham, Goldsboro, Greenville, Manteo, Plymouth, Raleigh, Wilmington, Winston-Salem;
4) Omaha, Nebraska - where twenty people are to work on theatrical productions in connection with the city Recreational Department and the Community Playhouse;

5) St. Louis, Mo. - where four people are to direct drama programs in the various social agencies of St. Louis;
6) Oklahoma City, Oklahoma - where the Federal Theatre Project furnishes teacher-directors in dramatics for leadership programs under the sponsorship of the Y.W.C.A. and the Girl Reserves interest groups of that city.
7) New York City - where 317 theatre workers are engaged in community service.

SPONSORS AND CIVIC COMMITTEES

Development of the Federal Theatre Project has been greatly aided by the active interest, advice, and often the substantial aid of such sponsoring bodies as schools, colleges, universities, churches, educational foundations, women's clubs, urban leagues, industrial clubs, Y.M.C.A.s and other state, civic, and county organizations. A national committee is composed of producers, actors, dramatists, critics, and representatives of many theatre unions, theatre groups, and theatre publications.

Committees in each community are composed of distinguished and public-spirited citizens interested in supporting local theatre centers. For example, one project, sponsored by the University of Southern California, sends on tour through the various schools and colleges a troupe of professional actors trained in a classical repertory decided upon mutually by the faculty and the theatre directors; in Seattle, the University of Washington is sponsoring several projects, one of which consists in the building of theatre models, showing the development of the stage. Another reclaims from old records the hitherto unwritten history of the American theatre in the west.

In many cases university and civic theatres of the region serve not only as sponsoring bodies, but as focal centers of the activity of Federal Theatre groups, contributing space and trained personnel: the Dallas Little Theatre, the Cleveland Playhouse, the North Carolina Playmakers, the University of California at Berkeley, the Tacoma Drama League, the University of Indiana, the Pasadena Playhouse, Washington University in St. Louis, the University of Oklahoma, the New York Public Library, the University of Washington at Seattle, the Portland Civic Theatre, and the Little Theatre of Houston, are included in this group.

Sponsoring bodies include also such organizations as the Seattle Press Club, the Knights of Columbus of Hartford, the Red Cross of New Haven, the American Legion of Seattle, the Galveston Department of Recreation, and many Rotary, Kiwanis and Lions' Clubs, the Women's Club of Concord, Massachusetts, the Dramatists' Guild of New York, the New York League of Theatre Managers, the New York Urban League, the Jewish Welfare Board of New York City.

THE AUDIENCE

"The skeptics who doubted that anything more coherent than a minstrel show could be extricated.....may now see the thing before their eyes, complete with costumes, scenery, ushers and musicians, ...every taxpayer ought to see it."--Irving Ramsdell, reviewing the Federal Theatre Project production of *Green Grow the Lilacs*, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 3, 1936.

While the primary aim of the Federal Theatre Project is to return theatre workers to their profession, bound up with that aim are others equally important, one of which is affording theatre entertainment to people who for the past few years have been unable to afford such entertainment. Any estimate of the numbers affected by the Federal Theatre Project must include not only the people actually employed on the stage, but the hundreds of thousands watching such performances. For example, in New England 33 theatre companies play an average of 130 engagements a week to an audience of approximately 50,000 Seventy per cent of these performances here, as elsewhere throughout the country, are given free in Government Camps and state institutions - asylums, reformatories, homes for the aged, hospitals, prisons. In Chicago the Park Board, cooperating with the Federal Theatre Project, gives the use of shelter houses as entertainment centers, and here in the past

months our companies have played to 182,485 people. The racial theatres in Boston--Yiddish, Italian, and Negro, performing plays from their various dramatic literatures, play weekly to thousands of their own people.

Since it is part of the objective to retrain people in theatre-going, obviously only those who cannot afford to pay should be admitted free. Therefore, the Works Progress Administration, in cooperation with the United States Treasury, has worked out a plan whereby a properly bonded cashier, acceptable to both of the above departments, may collect admissions and expend such admissions for rentals, scripts, and other production expenses. While we cannot report large box-office returns, we can say that theatres charging admissions are operating successfully in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Peoria, Miami, San Francisco, Cleveland.

From coast to coast in cities and towns, theatre people being retrained in their own field are, in turn, retraining thousands of others in theatre-going. For this habit, so often deplored as lost to America, can, it seems, be re-established to the advantage of an art and an industry which has declined notably in the past few years.

The vast potential audience for a people's theatre has barely been touched. In Civilian Conservation Corps camps throughout America there are 300,000 young men between the ages of 16 and 25. All that they will learn of art, music, the theatre, in the next few years, they will learn in the camps. The 65 dramatic leaders the Federal Theatre Project has thus far sent to the camps are but the advance guard of a large group called for and to be sent. Traveling companies through the CCC's, which attained importance in the Second Corps Area under the drama unit of the C.W.A., are on tour under the federal program in California, New England, District of Colun
trict of Columbia, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Washington, and New York. Such units are planned extensively for spring in the very best entertainment that can be sent.

Our experience of six months with Federal Theatre shows evidence that this undertaking will be of more than temporary value to the nation. The demand for living theatre is vigorous; the professional actors are there; the government provides temporary funds in the hope of bringing the two permanently together. Many individual performers are passing into commercial employment, and entire vaudeville units, recruited and retrained by the Federal Theatre Project, are being bid for in the open market. Finally, the Prl
the open market. Finally, the Project has expanded and in many instances created the demand for professional theatrical entertainment as a permanent and indispensible part of the work of public institutions.

INDEBTEDNESS

It is impossible to conclude this report without expressing our indebtedness, as workers on the Federal Theatre Project, to the many other agencies without s
to the many other agencies without which we could not function.

Orchestras from the Federal Music Project not only play in our theatres, not only give us composers and pianists, but even, as in the case of our recent production of *Jefferson Davis*, unearth for our use at the opportune moment of the Richmond opening, the original music played as Jefferson Davis' funeral march. In Los Angeles, the designers of the Federal Theatre Project have created costumes and scenery for a production by the Federal Music Project of the opera, *Tales from Hoffman*. This joint enterprise is breaking attendance records in Southern California, and the spirit of cooperation shown by both Projects has been the subject of much favorable press comment.

The Federal Art Project furnishes us with a staff of designers and artists for the making of posters, essential to us, since they are practically our only means of advertising performances. It is under the Art Project's Index of Design that we are to make the portfolio on the History of American Stage Design.

To the Writers' Project we are indebted for many of our research workers, and for comradely advice as to semi-colons and such baffling matters.

We are linked, however, not only with the other art projects, but with an amazing number of workers in other fields--with safety engineers and firemen, with

chauffeurs, school superintendents, doctors, seamstresses, electricians, clerks, accountants, doormen, cleaners, window washers, type setters, elevator boys, telephone operators, guards, camera men, sign painters, mimeograph operators, tailors, treasurers, and timekeepers.

In this association lies our strength. The theatre they are helping us build is their theatre.

79205
FE
1

Vol.1,No.5 ▪ April, 1936

FEDERAL THEATRE

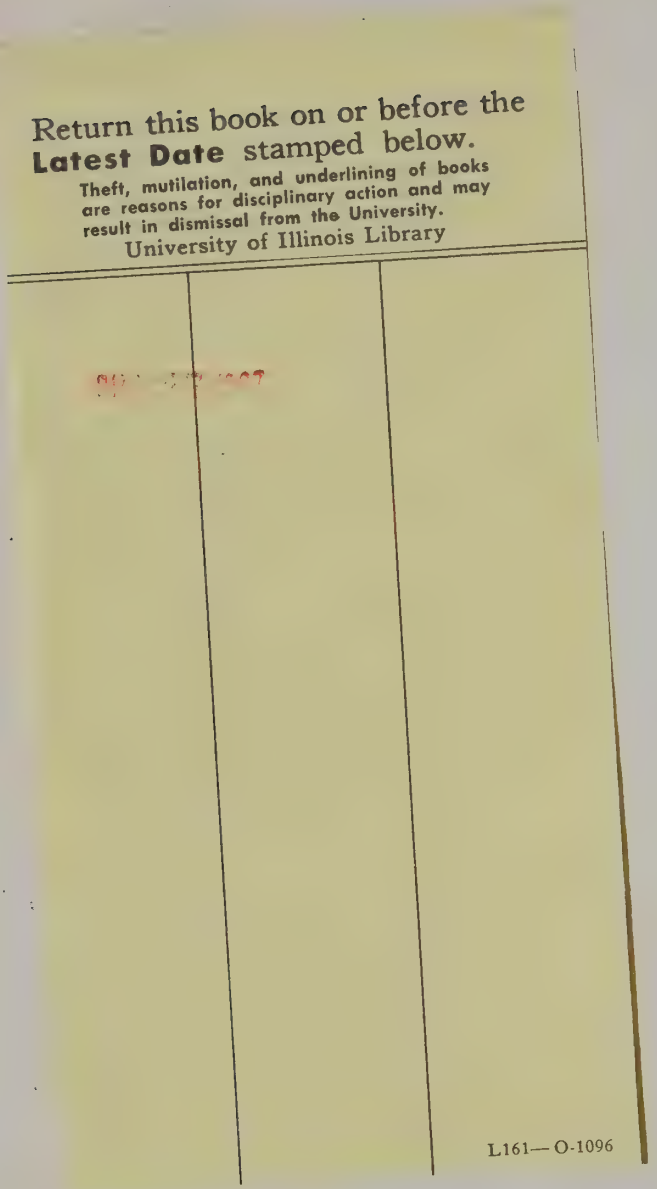
THE LIBRARY OF THE
NOV 1 6 1950
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

Works Progress Administration

Return this book on or before the
Latest Date stamped below.

Theft, mutilation, and underlining of books are reasons for disciplinary action and may result in dismissal from the University.

University of Illinois Library



L161— O-1096

FEDERAL THEATRE

No.5

Monthly Bulletin of the Federal Theatre Project, Hallie Flanagan, Director • A division of the United States Works Progress Administration, Harry L. Hopkins, Administrator • Produced by the Bureau of Research and Publication, Kate Drain Lawson, Managing Project Supervisor • Printed by the offset process on equipment provided by the Rockefeller Foundation.

303 West 42nd Street, New York MEdallion 3-3906

News

Federal Theatre: Seventh Month..... 5
The Dance Comes Back to the Theatre. *Anthony Buttitta* 8
Men at Work: Southeast..... *Hallie Flanagan* 11
Editing the Living Newspaper..... 16
These Productions are Different..... *Mayer Portner* 19
Box Score, *Cum Notis Variorum*..... *Pierre de Rohan* 21
Have You Read Any Good Plays Lately?. *Rosamond Gilder* 25
The Other Art Projects..... *Mark Marvin* 27

Features

Frontispiece..... *Multilitnograph by Don Freeman* 4
How Our Workers Are Employed..... *Chart* 7
Costumes for *Macbeth*..... *Color Plates.* 14, 15
The Marionettes Have Come!..... *Audience Photographs* 18
Our Collaborators..... *Picture Page* 24
Curtain Calls by Mail..... *Letters* 29
Play Lists and Reports..... Back Cover

THE PRODUCTION STAFF:

Sebastiano Brunetti . . . *Pressman*
Anthony Buttitta . . . . *Reporter*
Pierre de Rohan . . . . . *Editor*
Alice Fried . . . . . *Artist*
George Griggs . . *Editorial Assistant*
Mark Marvin . . . . . *Reporter*
Mayer Portner . . . . . *Reporter*
Jessie Smith . . . . . *Secretary*
Leonard Smith . . . . . *Pressman*

"NOW DOES MY PROJECT GATHER TO A HEAD" SHAKESPEARE
"THE TEMPEST"

Editorial in the Detroit FREE PRESS, May 1, 1936

A Movement to Reckon With

WE THINK special recognition is due the dramatic enterprise at the Lafayette Theater which represents locally the Federal Theater project under the PWA.

The company is a part of a movement that is of definite economic and artistic significance.

It is made up of men and women who are taking advantage of a much needed opportunity to earn livings, who are going about their work earnestly and sincerely, and who have as an immediate ambition the presentation of worthwhile entertainment at a price within the reach of lean pocketbooks, people on relief being entitled to admission without charge.

But while the primary purposes of the Federal Theater project are to provide employment for people with dramatic experience and talent, and offer worthwhile diversion, the significance of the enterprise goes far beyond this.

If it is developed along the right lines, as is the case in Detroit, it may prove directly preservative of what is being called in these days "the flesh and blood drama" which of late has fallen on lean times, but remains extremely important as an artistic institution.

The stage (to use the word in its historic sense) is a heritage of the race through many millenniums. It satisfies something which seems to be fundamental in human nature.

And while now the screen far outstrips in general popularity what used to be called the "legitimate drama," there are increasing evidences that it nevertheless is heavily dependent upon the preservation of the "legitimate" for its welfare and for its continuing development as a form of art.

More and more the best screen actors are being drawn from the ranks of those who have had experience on the stage. Because these people acquire training and method, and a knowledge of the demands and reactions of the public, they cannot get anywhere else.

At the present moment, almost every Hollywood star of any account once was an "actor on the stage." It was not so in the silent days, but the sound apparatus and the more exacting demands of the public have changed things.

A person must have "the goods" now to get anywhere in the movies, and there is only one place where he can learn to produce them.

Equally it is true that however much one may grow to love the movies, there is something the legitimate theater has to give which a certain percentage of the human race longs for as it longs for food, and must have.

Federal Theatre: Seventh Month

The WPA has literally...turned the theatre back to the people to whom it rightfully belongs...WPA plays have been given acceptable production at prices ranging from 25 to 55 cents...and they have provided those emotional satisfactions that playgoers buy in the theatre for people who for years have been arbitrarily denied a theatre costing from $1.00 to $3.00—— Burns Mantle, in the New York Daily News.

• • •

■ Fuse this quotation from one of the nation's foremost drama critics with the quotation from Shakespeare which captions Don Freeman's lithograph on the page facing this, and an inventory of the Federal Theatre in its seventh month emerges.

Our program has reached its peak. Wherever in the autumn of 1935, theatrical unemployment existed to an extent which justified organization, producing units are now in operation. In 26 states and the District of Columbia, productions ranging from poetic drama to minstrel shows, with almost every imaginable intervening classification, are being presented to audiences that, for the most part, had long been alienated from the living theatre.

Perhaps most astonishing and certainly most gratifying of the results which can already be counted with certainty is the response of the public to our programs. In 1935 nearly all interested factions agreed that "the road" was dead; that people outside the larger cities would not patronize plays with living actors. Today, however, more than 400,000 people each week witness Federal Theatre productions. Most of these are inhabitants of the smaller cities and towns of "the road", who were believed to have forsaken the theatre.

Even in the larger cities, new audiences are demonstrably being recruited for the living theatre -- not the Federal Theatre alone, but the theatre as a whole. At the beginning of our program, a survey of high schools in New York City revealed the amazing fact that only one

high school student in thirty in this theatrical capital of the world had ever seen a play with living actors. Today there is hardly a student who has not seen such plays, selected in cooperation with school authorities and performed by our players. As a result, many, if not most, of these young people have acquired an appreciation of and an interest in the living theatre, and thus take their places as part of present and future paying audiences.

Patronage of our plays has been found to depend much less upon the admission charge, or lack thereof, than upon the quality of the productions offered. Good plays, well performed, have attracted large and appreciative audiences, whether presented free or for an admission charge. Less worthy productions have been received with corresponding apathy.

It is a policy of the Federal Theatre that such acting companies as seem to merit financial support in their respective communities shall be permitted to charge a moderate admission fee, the proceeds to be devoted to improving the quality of the productions and to paying the expenses of more extensive travel, so that a wider public may benefit. This is done chiefly in the larger cities, but the companies charging admission are a small minority compared with those giving performances free, especially to CCC Camps, to state and other institutions such as hospitals, orphan asylums, etc., and to underprivileged neighborhoods.

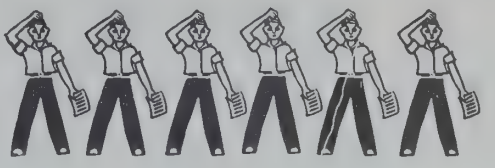
Although actors tend to congregate in the large urban centers, nevertheless the great majority of our performances are given to audiences which rarely have an opportunity to see theatrical entertainment with living actors. These include CCC Camps and state institutions, and audiences in small cities and rural communities, granges, etc., many of which have no regular entertainment except what they devise for themselves, and most of which had not, until Federal Theatre came, seen a play with living actors for five or ten years.

As for the internal state of the Federal Theatre in its seventh month, Mr. Freeman's drawing tells one side of the story. The animated labor chart which follows this statement tells the other. For concrete details of the work as it is being carried forward in one section of the country, turn to the national director's travelogue beginning on page 11 of this bulletin. This is the first in a series which will be continued next month from the Middle West and which will, in its entirety, cover the whole project and give all of us an accurate panoramic view of the work we are doing.

Marionettes With Amplifiers, And Skyscrapers As A Back Drop

HOW OUR WORKERS ARE EMPLOYED

Actors Including Circus, Vaudeville, etc. 46.86 o/o

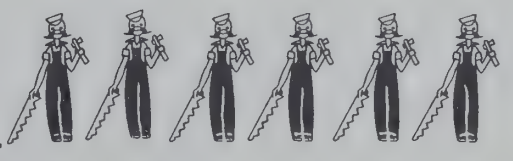
Directors And Other Supervisors.....  5.09 o/o

Artists Costume and Scenic Designers..... 1.59 o/o

Writers Playwrights, Research Workers, etc..... 3.01 o/o

Ushers Theatre Managers, Cashiers, Boxoffice Men, Ticket-Takers, etc..... 7.37 o/o

Costumers Seamstresses and Wardrobe Mistresses..... 2.93 o/o

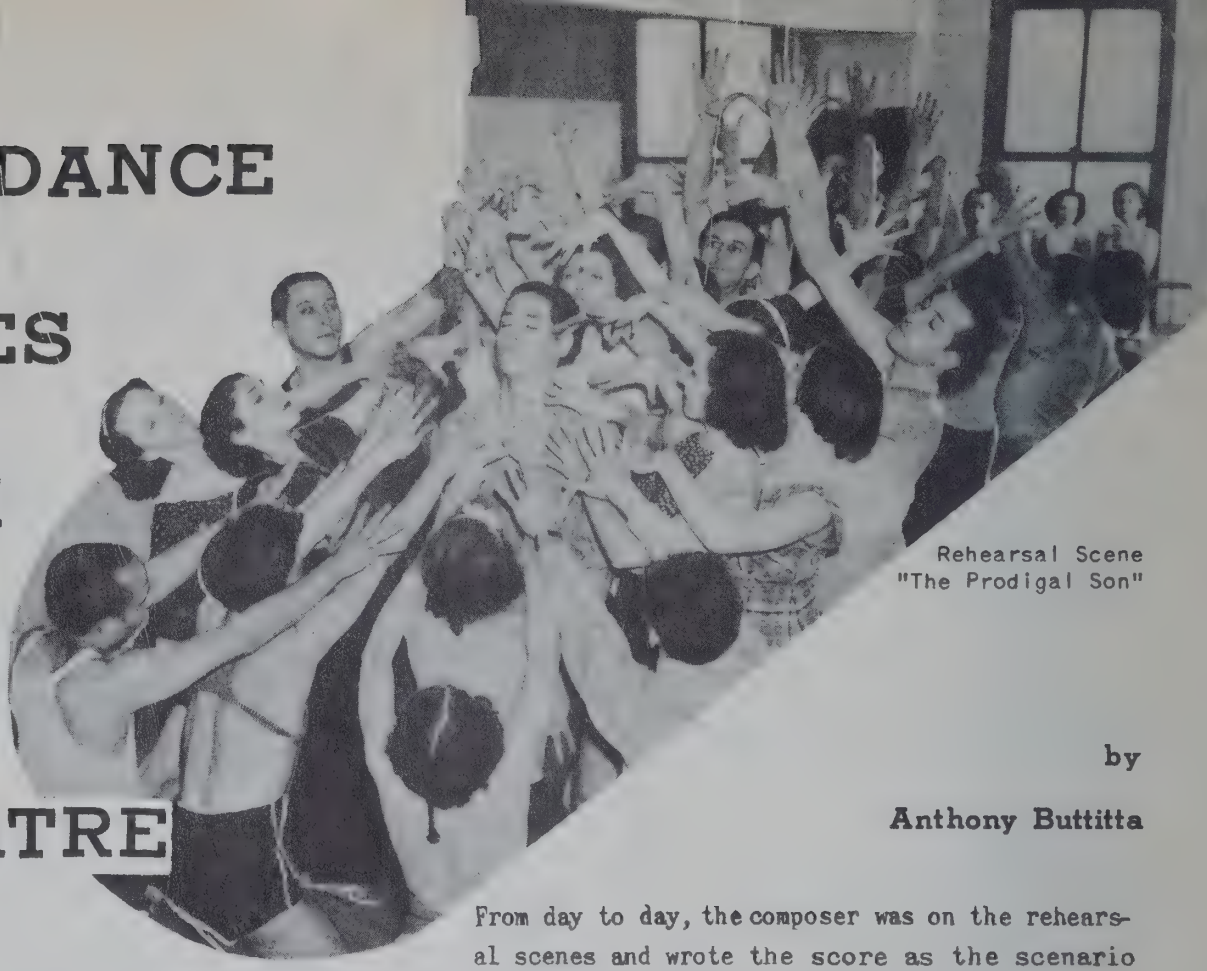
Stagehands Electricians, Carpenters, etc.....  14.45 o/o

Clerks And Other Office Workers..... 7.19 o/o

Watchmen Janitors, Cleaners, etc..... 6.80 o/o

Teachers In CCC Camps, etc..... 4.72 o/o

THE DANCE COMES BACK to the THEATRE



Rehearsal Scene
"The Prodigal Son"

by

Anthony Buttitta

To develop a common denominator technique that will consider the various movement demands of all types and varieties of dance requirements, and to extend the boundaries of the American dance as to form and subject matter into a full-length theatre piece, are the two main objectives of the Dance Theatre of the Federal Theatre Project in New York.

Of the nine productions in rehearsal under the direction of four project choreographers, one is an entirely new work. *Young Tramps* is no fragmentary recital number; it is definitely a theatre piece, as much as a symphony or a full-length play, in which the material has been completely developed in dance movement. The remaining productions are revisions of works from the repertoires of the choreographers.

Young Tramps, based on a sociological survey of boys and girls on the road by Thomas Minehan, is the first scheduled production. The scenario and choreography of this experimental work is by Don Oscar Becque, managing producer of the dance unit, and the music has been composed for it by Donald Pond, a music supervisor on the project.

Except in certain rare cases, dance scenarios have been adapted or synchronized to some existing musical composition. The music for *Young Tramps* was not only written for it, but was composed by Mr. Pond during rehearsals. From day to day, the composer was on the rehearsal scenes and wrote the score as the scenario was being translated into movement by the dancers.

Marking a definite return of the dance to the theatre, this production brings with it experimentation in staging and dance technique. A plastic movable set of inclined planes, designed by Walter Walden, forms an integral part of the dance movement. Both dynamics and space — two of the five elements of the modern dance -- had to be adapted for the dancers to perform flexibly and efficiently up and down the differently inclined planes.

This production is theatre, but not in the sense of being an imitation of a play. The producer explains: "It holds true to the ancient verities of Aristotle, the exciting of pity in an audience, for it has progress, excitement, color, climax. This is achieved not necessarily by story or plot, but by the designs of rhythm, the concentration of body into instrument, and the union of space and time."

Of this return of the dance to the theatre, Hallie Flanagan, national director of the Federal Theatre Project, had the following to say in the *New York Times*, January 12, 1936 "It is impossible to think of the modern theatre without thinking of the dance. The theatre director, learning from such unconscious sources as Mickey Mouse, Aeschylus, Mei Lan Fang and the

Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze, gradually realizes that he must have movement as well as a script."

The remaining eight productions also tend away from the short, disconnected forms of the dance recital to the longer, more integrated theatre forms. They are: *Salut au Monde*, music by Genevieve Pitot and choreography by Tamiris, both of the Dance Theatre staff. This is a movement to be added to the Walt Whitman cycle which was first presented at the Lewisohn Stadium during the summer of 1934.

Working together as one choreographer, Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman are preparing four numbers: *Suite in F*, music by Rousel; *Marche*, music by Tcherepnine; *Promenade*, music by Wallingford Riegger, also of the Dance Theatre music staff; and *Candide*, a ballet based on the Voltaire classic, with music by Riegger and Miss Pitot.

Gluck-Sandor and Felicia Sorel, working together as one choreographer, are rehearsing three works: *Tempo*, a modern jazz ballet on the subject of dance marathons, music by Kingsley, to be offered on the same program with *Young Tramps*. An actor is being used for vocal effects in this jazz work, and Mr. Walden is designing a set for it. The other numbers are *The Prodigal Son*, music by Prokofieff, and *Tyl Eulenspiegel*, music by Strauss. The choreographers will appear in their own productions.

Since the Dance Theatre is composed of dancers and choreographers of the modern concert field, it faces the significant problem of the modern dance, which has been and still is to find a technique to fit all types and varieties of dance requirements. The dance vocabulary is composed of various individual techniques, and this condition exists in the present Dance Theatre producing units.

The development of a common technique will make possible the return of the dance from its choppy recital form of short, disconnected dances, to the theatre stage where it belongs as an independent art. The classic form and the personal idiosyncrasies of many techniques may have sufficed for the fragmentary dances; but for the presentation of full-hour theatre pieces, built around a single theme and its variations, a more cohesive and integrated movement technique is required.

A composite technique of this sort will be necessary to express in movement the subject matter of the day, which in spirit and idea differs from that which inspired the classic ballet and the lyrical dances. The modern dance calls for the evaluation of technique in terms of the vital social and economic problems that confront the contemporary world, the Federal Theatre posits, and the subject matter of the modern dance will arise from these problems.

Just as the American dance made its break from the classic form and tradition more than a decade ago, it is now making a definite break from the subjects of that older form. Arising out of a young mood of rebellion, the modern dance will more and more express an attitude, as it does in *Young Tramps*, or protest against injustice wherever it is found, but it will not cease to be attractive as entertainment.

Two significant features of the Dance Theatre are: (1) the choreographers, who, with one exception, are the leaders of the modern movement in the American dance, have independently reached an understanding of the basic

■ The Mirror Gives You Two Views of New York Project Dance Rehearsal

elements of their art -- subject matter, body as instrument, rhythm, space and dynamics; (2) for the first time in the history of the dance, a group of choreographers and dancers are gathered on an economic basis to solve problems which will make for the survival of the dance and, it is hoped, the production of its best work.

The complete program of the Dance Theatre includes: first, giving young American dancers their first serious opportunity to perform; second, arranging a series of young choreographers' forums, in which their works will be presented for criticism with view of public performance; and third, experimenting with choral, instrumental and orchestral effects.

The Dance Theatre employs approximately 100, including dance and music supervisors, company and producing managers, and 82 dancers. The dancers will not only perform in Dance Theatre productions, but will be used in some of the dramatic offerings, according to Mrs. Flanagan. "Although for purposes of group work and performance, the dancers are a separate unit, the Federal Theatre Project plans to use them in the theatre units, for the dancer can teach the actor much. Particularly on a stage such as that of the Federal Theatre, where there can be no lavish expenditures for scenery and costumes, where the actors must move us without benefit of Bergdorf-Goodman, it is necessary for the directors to learn the hard lessons of the dancer -- how to emphasize and distort line, how to assault by color, how to design at once in space and time."

■

Getting Things Done

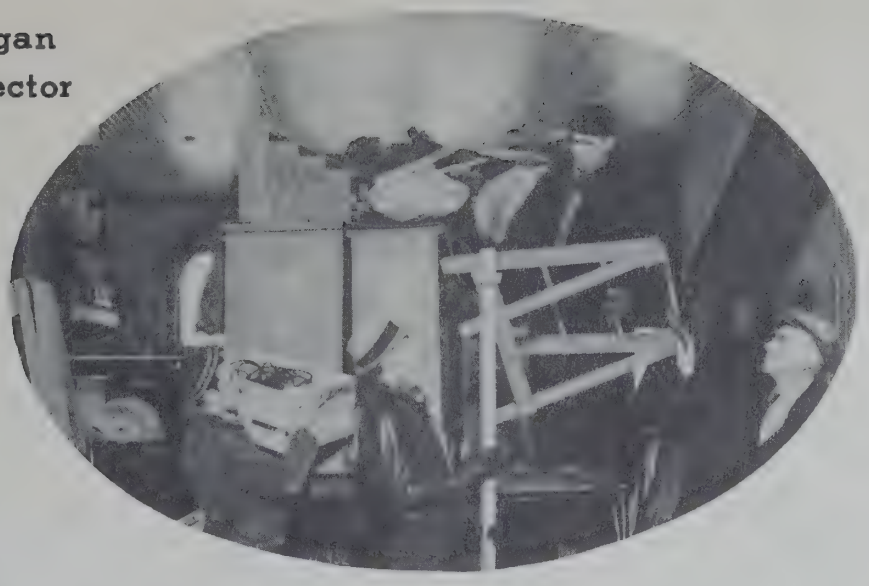
In Lincoln, Nebraska, an examination of Home Relief and WPA rolls discovered some twenty-odd theatrical workers employed on projects for which they were unfitted by training and experience. These were brought together as a unit of the Federal Theatre by Alice Howell, state director, and placed under the supervision of Elwin Strong, a professional director and producer.

But how to "make theatre" without a building? There were no vacant theatres in Lincoln.

They secured a vacant floor in a business building at 1516 N Street, and made it over to meet their needs. Its metamorphosis is shown in the photographs at the right.

More than 19,000 people have seen plays presented by the troupe in this improvised setting.

by **Hallie Flanagan**
National Director



Our Truckmen
"Load a Show"

MEN AT WORK : SOUTHEAST

■ One of the many things which I learned on a recent two weeks' trip seeing our Southern Federal Theatre projects in operation was the variety of the work being done on other projects under the Works Progress Administration. Roads and highways are being built throughout the South; sea-walls are being repaired; villages devastated by floods are being rebuilt; recreation centers, playgrounds, and public parks are all coming into being under the Works Progress Administration. In New Orleans the extensive park system laid out and started by Huey Long is being carried forward, and a great amphitheatre is almost completed. Here, within easy accessibility of all New Orleans, will be held ball games, concerts by the Federal Music Project, and plays by the Federal Theatre Project. The bas-reliefs for the amphitheatre are being done by workers on the Federal Art Project: Enrique Alferez, a young Mexican, has worked out remarkable designs for this sculpture, using workers of all nationalities engaged in the many phases of the job; these gigantic simple figures might serve as the keynote of the entire program -- Men at Work.

The Women's Division under Works Progress is doing well-organized, competent work in rug-making, quilt making, bandage rolling, shirt making, pottery, and kindred useful crafts. In Tampa, for example, a six-story cigar factory has been turned over to the Women's Department, and here you can see piles of commodities prepared for the destitute, for charitable institutions, and for victims of flood, fire, and other calamities. In one large department called *Toy Reclaiming*, old toys donated by the well-to-do are cleaned and repainted by the women, thus guaranteeing that at Christmas time no destitute child in the South will be without some gift.

On a trip from Tampa to Miami by motor with the Director of Professional and Service Projects, I learned much of the work of the women's sewing rooms. They take pride in their buildings, and in their free time once a week they decorate the place and have a dance to which they invite their friends and families. Especially through rural sections of the South, the Works Progress buildings are becoming centers for plays, concerts, and art exhibits for people who have never had any such form of entertainment. I shall not soon forget one room in which some fifty Negro women, dressed in white smocks and white head-bands, were singing at their work:

"Like a tree
That's planted by the water
I will not be removed -
Jesus in my cottage will not be removed
Just like a tree that's planted
I'm sanctified and holy
I'm sanctified and holy
And will not be removed."

Considering the fact that most of these women were destitute beggars before this program started, the song had a certain potency.

Not only is there variety in the work of the whole program, but within our own Theatre Project. In North Carolina the major part of our

work, aside from one professional company in Asheville, is in cooperation with recreation and adult education in the furnishing of dramatic leaders for under-privileged groups. One young man, himself a professional actor and director, who had become so interested in the CCC camps that he asked to be transferred to one of them as a resident drama instructor, told of his first trip to this camp and of his discouragement as, talking to the boys about the theatre, he looked into row after row of stolid, sullen faces. "I was furious at myself as I looked at them, for thinking that they would know or care anything about the theatre, and as I finished, I said, rather tartly: 'The talk is over now and none of you need to stay unless you would be interested in forming a theatre group here'. I sat down. No one moved. I thought they had not understood, so I said again: 'That is all for tonight; you may all go now — unless there are a few of you who would like to start a dramatic club.' Again no one moved, but a tall boy in the back of the room, one of the most sullen-looking, said: 'Well, I guess if it has anything to do with the theatre, we'd all like to join the club'. They all joined the club. They are building a stage, they are writing plays, they are performing them, and above all they are anxious to see some of the traveling players from the federal companies." Multiply the boy who spoke by 350,000 in camps throughout America and you get a potential audience which I think we, as directors on the Federal Theatre Project, should study.

The other experiment which we are trying in North Carolina is the settlement of a New York company, using Raleigh as a base, for limited touring through the South. The *Jefferson Davis* company ended its tour there, and President Graham, of the University of North Carolina, and Professor Koch of the Drama Department, generously offered them rehearsal space, free attendance at classes, and a part in the university life. Professor Koch feels that his theatre students will gain a great deal from observation of the professional company, and the members of that company who chose to remain are most enthusiastic about the plan. They are at present rehearsing *The Taming of the Shrew*, and plan to do a number of classical plays to supplement the work of Professor Koch's students who specialize in performances of native drama.

The Louisiana program is entirely different from that of North Carolina, being sponsored,

under the direction of Bernard Szold, by *Le Petit Theatre du Vieux Carre*, which many of you know as one of the most beautiful theatres in the country. Our federal company has, for a small rental, rehearsal and performance space, and access to all the resources of the plant. In addition to a spirited rehearsal of *After*

Dark by our federal New Orleans company, I saw the Saturday morning Neighborhood show, which is one of the most successful ways I have yet seen of employing vaudeville talent. The audience was composed of children and their parents from the French quarter, and the performers, with Mr. Szold as interlocutor, gave an amusing sequence consisting of a marionette show, several musical and dance acts, a miniature minstrel, a Japanese paper-tearing act, and a magician act. "I have played before audiences all over the world and have received decorations from royalty", Herman, the magician told me, "but I have never enjoyed any audiences as much as these Saturday morning crowds".

I found in New Orleans, as elsewhere throughout the South, close cooperation between the different art projects; a State Administration keenly interested in our work; musicians loaned to our theatre by the Music Project; and a marionette play, *Bogus, Bogus* written and designed for our group by Alferez, the same sculptor designing the bas-reliefs for the stadium.

Florida surprised me by its savagery. I think we are misled by fiction about Miami and Palm Beach and by the advertisements in *The New Yorker*, into thinking the resort towns are Florida. We forget Tarpon Springs, seacoast town of the Greek sponge fishers; we forget the Seminoles -- not those in villages on display for the tourist, but those living in swamp secrecy the remote life of their tribe. These are some of the phases to be studied by our dramatists in preparation for a play by all of our Florida projects tentatively called, *Who Made Florida?*

Ride from Tampa through the Everglades, a hundred miles of swamp, the landscape as desolate as that of North Africa: gray moss, gray sand, vistas of cypress trees and palms; blue-black Negroes, sweating in the sun, oiling the blue-black roads; huge black buzzards, obscene, rising from the swamps; a flight of herons, blue, gray, white; kingfishers poised on stumps, waiting to pounce on fish in the swamp beneath; black snakes coiled on the road; alligators motionless in the stagnant waters. A strange pallor hangs over this landscape, and some of this strangeness, along with some of the excitement of its cities, I should like to see in a play about Florida.

Here is Tampa: I was informed that the population is 110,000, of which 30,000 are Latins, including Cubans, Mexicans, Italians, Spanish, French, 21,000 are Negroes, and 30,000 are white Americans. When I asked about the discrepancy in these figures, I was told "The rest are borderline". (What about *Borderline* as the title of a play?) Most of these races are represented on our projects. We have a Cuban company, doing an exciting revue, full of native songs and dances; we have an Italian company doing grand opera in conjunction with the Music Project; we have an American company, and a Spanish company. All of these, under the direction of Charles Hopkins, Jr., use the same theatre and are interchangeable. Before the end of the year they hope to do a play of native material-- perhaps a modern *Carmen* about the cigar factories of Tampa.

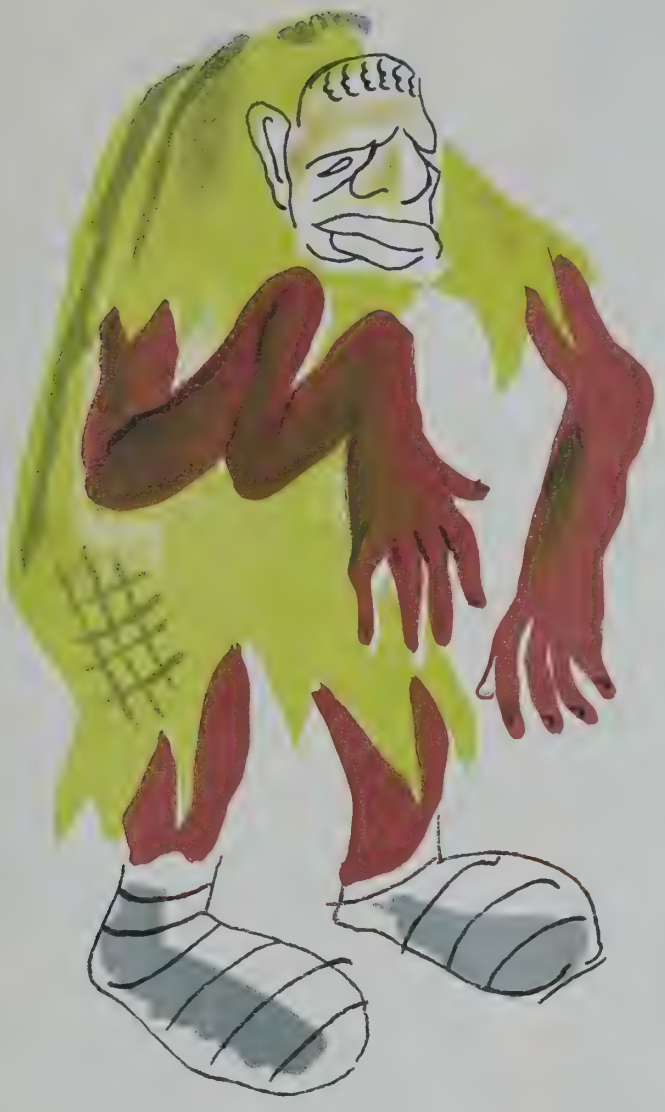
In Jacksonville I saw a performance of *Saturday's Children*, moving because of the sincerity of the players. One of them said to me afterwards, "We can act this play because we are all Saturday's Children".

Of the Miami Federal Theatre group, Walter Hay, leading newspaper critic writes:

"At last Miami has a living theatre. It was incontestably demonstrated last night by the Miami Federal Players in their presentation of George Kelly's perennial comedy, *The Show-off*. It was the best resident show Miami has enjoyed in many years. They're doing an excellent job over there at the Temple. Director Bernard Craven obviously knows his stuff, and is at last giving us professional repertoire that is worthy of our sustained interest."

Our Southern units, like most of the units on the Federal Theatre Project, are succeeding in the first of our three objectives -- that is, they are rehabilitating professional theatre workers and conserving their various skills. They are beginning to move along the line of our second objective, that of contributing, in cooperation with the other arts and with the entire Works Progress Administration program, rich and various community service. I should like to see the Southern theatres, as well as all of our other theatres, moving continuously toward that second objective and at the same time approaching the third objective -- that of making the intensely vital life of their various communities live in plays and methods of production which are as essentially different as their communities, but as essentially American as the Federal Theatre Project.

Costumes by one of our own designers, Nat Karson, for the Federal Theatre Production of *Macbeth* by the Negro Theatre in New York. Executed in our own workshop. Rendered for lithography by Albert Carman



EDITING THE LIVING NEWSPAPER

It's Not so Simple as It Seems

The Living Newspaper tells the news of the day with living actors instead of type and newsprint. This unit of Federal Theatre, which produced *Triple-A Plowed Under* at the Biltmore Theatre in New York in March, is the pioneer in this theatre-form in America. A similar unit has opened in Cleveland, Ohio, and others are projected in other cities.

Triple-A Plowed Under, which Burns Mantle, drama critic of the New York Daily News, called "the most vital idea which has entered the American theatre in years", told in 27 brief incidents the essential events in the farm crisis since the World War, adding neither comment nor "drama" but confining itself to the significant incidents as reported in the daily press. The result was a concentrated presentation of all the principal factors in the farm crisis, told with the objectiveness of an Associated Press news report and with the vividness of an acted play. We saw farm depression in action — farmers getting 3 cents a quart for milk while consumers were unable to buy it for 15 cents; AAA compensation payments for reduction of acreage; share-croppers discharged; housewives striking against high meat prices. We heard AAA called unconstitutional by a majority opinion of the Supreme Court and defended by minority opinion. We heard such sterling democrats as Al Smith and Thomas Jefferson utter their highly diverse views of the majority decision. It was all in the news.

How is this newspaper "published"? Its publishing staff is organized like that of a large city daily. The editor-in-chief, or producer, has under him a managing editor, and he under him a city editor, who in turn directs the work of thirty-five reporters, fourteen copy-readers, seven research specialists and ten rewrite men. This staff produces the newspaper -- i.e. the script which is acted out by Federal Theatre actors on the stage of the Biltmore.

This script differs from a conventional play in that it is not "written" as a play is written; it is reported. The imaginative dramatist invents and arranges his scenes to create a chosen effect. The reporters of the Living Newspaper are not permitted to invent anything, or arrange any sequence. They cannot choose a climax or a moral. They take the news exactly as it is and prepare it for the stage.

Preparing news for the stage is not so different as one might suppose from preparing news for the press. The craft of the reporter in both cases lies in seeing the essential news value in the event and stating it simply; above all in knowing when to stop. One of the scenes in *Triple-A Plowed Under* told its entire story in one perfectly chosen word. Skill and training are required to find out exactly what happened, select what is important, and tell it clearly in the fewest possible words.

It sounds easy, but good reporting is one of the most difficult branches of writing. How for example would you report the subject of crime, the theme of the next edition of the Living Newspaper? What are the essential facts of crime in the United States? A huge task of reporting, verifying, weighing, condensing and finding the comparatively few headlines which will tell the entire story. It must be organized. That is what the city desk is for.

The theme is chosen by the managing producer and the Federal Theatre director for New York City, in consultation with the national director. It then goes into round-table discussion, much as a board of editors would discuss the layout of a national news story for tomorrow's edition. The managing editor, who is also the head dramatist, then breaks down a subject into scenes, indicating as specifically as possible the treatment he has in mind for each scene, and passes this on to the city editor in charge of the research and editing staff. This scenario is then parceled out as assignments to the research men with a dead-line of two or three days to get the material required.

The mass of material which is presently brought in by the thirty-five reporters is sufficient to make fifty evenings at the Biltmore. It must be sifted, selected, cut, organized. Somewhere in the process the headlines begin to

emerge. These indicate the trend of the story and suggest the key scenes in which it is to be told. The managing editor makes a scene scheme - the logical sequence of the story. From this the production scheme is worked out: the dramatic sequence translated to terms of the stage, the characters planned and the action plotted.

The scenes are now assigned to the sixteen rewrite men to put into dialogue. These are experienced dramatists. But they are bound by the newspaper rules of brevity, simplicity, clear grasp of the essentials. How would you write, for example, the essentials of the Al Capone story in two minutes of dialogue? The rewrite men may write dozens of dialogue scenes for each one that finally comes to production. A scene is often sent back four and five times before it achieves its final state of condensation. Often when one rewrite man has become stale on the story it is assigned to another for a fresh start.

Then again all the dialogue must be submitted to the project's lawyer, to be read for possible libel action. Many of the scenes represent living persons, and although they present only objective fact, still literal truth does not in itself guarantee against action for slander.

When the script has at last received tentative approval, it is still far from final form. It must be translated into "theatre" by the dramatists, the scene and costume designers, the light man, the sound man, the stage manager who will eventually have to see that the scenes are shifted instantaneously, and last, but not least, the business manager, who must make sure that the proposed production is not too expensive. All these specialized workers are equally subject to the newspaper rules -- brevity, simplicity, clearness. Scenes and impressions must follow in rapid succession and must get an instantaneous effect. Scenery must be very simple because it must not distract attention for a split second from the action.

The schedule of the Living Newspaper calls for a new production each fortnight, though the success of one edition may carry it over longer. While one production is being played its successor is in rehearsal and the latter's successor is being written and edited. The process here described, therefore, must generally be completed within four weeks.

Assignment

Research

Transcription

Production

The Marionettes Have Come!

Buffalo
Marionette
Unit

These Productions Are Different

by Mayer Portner

The Puppet Adam And His Creator

In various parts of the country and in various types of theatres, productions which may be classed as novelties are being presented as part of the Federal Theatre program. None of these, however, was produced merely for the sake of its novelty. In each case the departure from convention has been dictated by economy, necessity for simplified expression, or by the nature of the material to be presented.

Into this last category falls the Los Angeles County Marionette Theatre's dramatization by Edward Lynn of the biblical creation, called *Genesis*, one of five unusual puppet programs being done by this group, headed by Blanding Sloan.

Articulate as humans, Adam and Eve and the Serpent move through this story of creation -- "In the beginning God created heaven and earth"- and following the biblical account verbatim, through the mediums of orchestral music, choruses, light painting, the carved puppets tell the story.

Painting the first steps of creation from blackness to the advent of Adam is accomplished by a combination of moving color silhouettes and original music, appealing to the visual emotions as well as the auditory, as the raw forces of earth are thrust into form and man is created. A beam of light picks out Adam through the primeval mist as he arises and explores his Garden, examining the newly-created animals with interest and awe. The interlude of Eve and the Serpent advances the story against a background of music and light, and the final ejection from the Garden brings the play to a close with the rebuking voice of the Lord driving the two culprits out.

Technically, the production presents many innovations to the puppet stage. Mists, created by filming water over the face of lights from a specially built switchboard, accompany the arising of Adam and Eve when the breath of life enters them. The switchboard acts almost as a color organ in the opening scenes of *Genesis* as the world is evolving from chaos.

Adam and Eve, as well as the Serpent and various other animals, were designed and carved by a sculptor, Charles Cristadoro, who has evolved perfectly proportioned marionettes with amazing life. The figures of Adam and Eve are capable of rotary movements of wrist, arm, foot and leg, and are so fitted together that no joint appears, but different parts of limbs slide over each other, simulating human movements. They are operated with a minimum of strings. Of light pine wood, the hip pieces of

Some More Crippled Children Watching Buffalo Marionettes

Nicole and Jourdain as New Haven Saw Them

the dolls have been hollowed out on a lathe, and limbs hang from a central point in that hollow, allowing the torso to pivot freely while the legs remain stationary.

Eddison Von Ottenfeld wrote the music developing the script of *Genesis*, orchestrated for full symphony and voices. For practice purposes the music was recorded for two pianos. Transcriptions then were made in the recording laboratory built on the marionette project, with a sixty-five piece orchestra and a forty-two voice choir drawn from the Federal Music Project, for the actual production.

Speaking parts, musical interludes, and musical backgrounds for speeches were all recorded in their final, perfected form, eliminating the hazard of mistakes. Manipulators synchronize the movements of the dolls to the script and the music.

Genesis will be shown on a regulation marionette stage. While it is primarily designed for puppets, it could be translated with the recordings into terms of human actors on an indoor or outdoor stage.

In New Haven, the Connecticut One unit, directed by Walter Klavun, offered a modern, stylized version of Moliere's *The Would-Be Gentleman*. Innovations were chiefly in setting -- an abstract background for characters without relation to scene -- and in the introduction of mechanical gadgets, *a la* Meyerhold, to heighten the spirit of farce. In a letter to *Federal Theatre*, Hiram Motherwell gave this account of the opening performance:

"First, M. Jourdain's singing teacher. He enters from upstage, rising behind a wall, and walks down an impressive flight of steps, clad in a costume that is more fancy dress ball than Louis Quatorze. He is putting the finishing touches on his new minuet. Daintily he spots a new harmonic note into the score. Sour! The trombone in the pit groans. In disgust he throws the sheet of music paper over his shoulder. It strikes the floor with a thud from the kettle drum. Another note -- a squeak and a bump. At last he hits it right and the orchestra sweetly sings the tune -- curiously reminiscent of last year's film theme song.

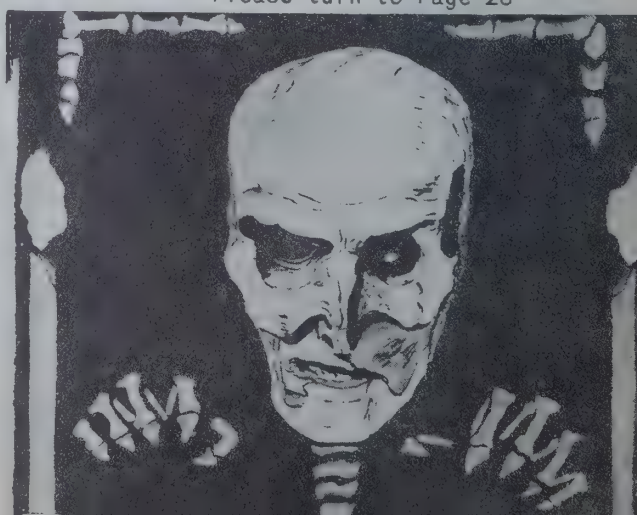
"The dancing teacher enters. They argue about beauty and agree that art is nourished by money, not by taste. Then the fencing master. The three quarrel like fishwives over the relative dignity of their crafts and dance around the stage in the unison of their wrath between pummelings.

"Comes now fat M. Jourdain. He rises like the sun to the top of the stairs. He condescends to step down to his subjects. The stairs flatten out. He occupies the center of the stage squarely on his bottom. Apt entrance for a rich fool.

"It is sheer clowning -- in music, dance, dialogue and stage device. When M. Jourdain entertains the Duchess at dinner and offers her her choice of fowl, the rare birds flit across the stage and the one which she chooses is shot down for the platter. When Nicole, enmeshed in the plot, remarks 'I must fly', a wire from above obligingly picks her up and carries her away. It all has the childlike roustabout fun of one of those miniature one-ring French circuses, which are mostly clowns and ponies.

"But Moliere's dialogue all comes through. You hear M. Jourdain insisting on wearing his dressing gown 'so that he may hear the music better', and see the fatuous smile on his face when he realizes that he has been talking prose all his life. He is not merely an eighteenth century boor but the type of fatuous dumbbell

Please turn to Page 28



Setting by Marshall Myott for Death Takes the Wheel

BOX SCORE

CUM NOTIS VARIORUM

by Pierre de Rohan

■ Three runs, four hits, two errors. This is the score of New York's major producing units at the end of the second inning, according to my tally.

Chalk Dust, Murder in the Cathedral and *Triple-A Plowed Under* have all scored runs much longer than their scheduled engagements. These three and the Negro Theatre's *Macbeth* are unquestionable hits, and the last-named may score the longest run of all. As for the errors, the first was, as I saw it from my seat in the bleachers, an early timidity about producing plays with a purpose. The second is the present tendency toward complacency. More about both some other time. Now, the play-by-play account:

The season opened with the Negro Theatre's *Walk Together, Chillun.* Frank Wilson, a better actor than author, realized that his play ought to say something but he could not decide what he wanted to say. The result was a diffusive and contradictory preachment which, in spite of good acting and a very excellent production, could not honestly be called successful, either artistically or as a box-office attraction. *Out at first, Public Indifference unassisted.*

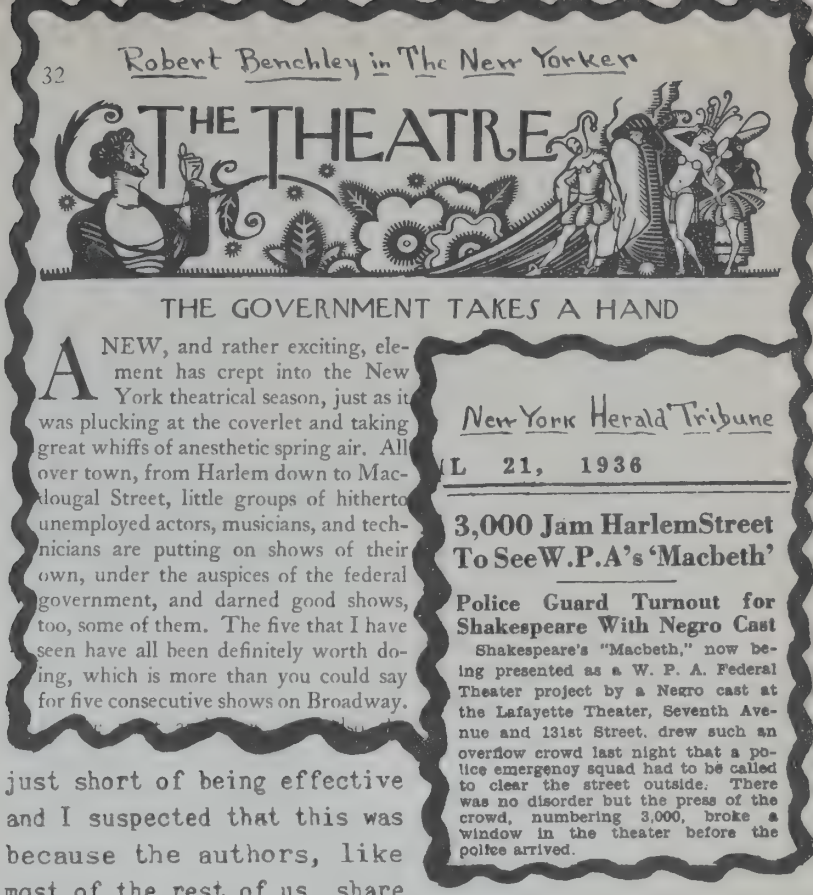
Next up was *American Holiday,* produced by The Popular Price Theatre. In this the authors, Edwin L. and Albert Barker, attempted to expose the foibles of a generation that makes a temporary national shrine of any community in which is being held a sensational murder trial. They were ably assisted by cast, director and scenic designer, and in the opinion of some spectators, scored a hit. The New York Sun's critic, for example, described the play as "a valid and interesting drama, well staged and acceptably acted". The New York Post called it "honest, sincere, and altogether moving". I thought it fell just short of being effective and I suspected that this was because the authors, like most of the rest of us, share to a very considerable extent in the psychological processes of the typical murder trial excursionist, and romanticize his puerilities and excesses in much the same fashion as he does. The result was a play in which I could find no more substantial claim to distinction than the neo-Belasco realism of a slot machine that disgorged a shower of "practical" nickels.

Left on base.

In the clean-up spot came *Chalk Dust,* with which the Experimental Theatre scored the first hit of the season.

Even if it had failed to catch the public's fancy, *Chalk Dust* would have been an important play because it is a play with a purpose. It attacks vigorously and with sympathetic understanding, the growing tendency toward tyranny, bureaucracy and intolerance in the public school system. An hour after its first curtain fell, Bide Dudley said in reviewing it on the air for Station WOR: "It is an excellent piece of work, very well directed, with a capable cast.....It is quite a thrill to think that a person can see a real play, beautifully acted, for the sum of 40 cents. It is also a treat to see some very fine actors able to show the public that being unemployed in the Theatre doesn't mean that they haven't any ability."

The World-Telegram said: "Heretofore it has been the habit of reviewers to be lenient with Federal Theatre productions on the basis that


32
Robert Benchley in The New Yorker
THE THEATRE
THE GOVERNMENT TAKES A HAND
A NEW, and rather exciting, element has crept into the New York theatrical season, just as it was plucking at the coverlet and taking great whiffs of anesthetic spring air. All over town, from Harlem down to MacDougal Street, little groups of hitherto unemployed actors, musicians, and technicians are putting on shows of their own, under the auspices of the federal government, and darned good shows, too, some of them. The five that I have seen have all been definitely worth doing, which is more than you could say for five consecutive shows on Broadway.
New York Herald Tribune
L 21, 1936
3,000 Jam HarlemStreet To SeeW.P.A's 'Macbeth'
Police Guard Turnout for Shakespeare With Negro Cast
Shakespeare's "Macbeth," now being presented as a W. P. A. Federal Theater project by a Negro cast at the Lafayette Theater, Seventh Avenue and 131st Street, drew such an overflow crowd last night that a police emergency squad had to be called to clear the street outside. There was no disorder but the press of the crowd, numbering 3,000, broke a window in the theater before the police arrived.

Scene From Chalk Dust — Setting by Howard Bay

'What the hell, they're doing pretty well considering everything. But no apologies are needed for *Chalk Dust*. In directing, casting, acting, and production it was superb. It has done for the theatre what the authors would do for the schools: fit them for the times."

Robert Benchley wrote of it (see what else he wrote in the clipping reproduced above) in the New Yorker: "If you are interested in the problems which confront teachers and educational institutions, or even if you just like to see a good play, it will be worth the trip" (to 63rd Street).

I, as one of the family, am willing to admit that *Chalk Dust* has faults which our friends the critics were too tolerant to mention. These arise chiefly from the frequent and violent underscoring of the play's determinism. But grandiloquence and euphuism are always the tools of the novice, and in spite of their awkward use in this first play, its fundamental soundness survives. As this is being written, *Chalk Dust* is in its ninth week. *One run, one hit, only a few minor errors.*

At this point a pinch hitter, *Conjure Man Dies*, was sent in by The Negro Theatre. Not intended as a regular production, this mystery farce served adequately for three weeks while the costumes were being made for *Macbeth*. Its handsome sets were constructed by the company, and the production and acting were well up to standard. It was still attracting sizable audiences when it was withdrawn. *Walked by pitcher.*

Triple-A Plowed Under scored the first home run. Its story is told rather completely elsewhere in this bulletin, but Federal Theatre workers in other states might like to know how it was received by the New York press. Heywood Broun, in the World-Telegram, said it was "one of the most interesting dramatic productions in town". The New York Times said: "On the whole it is theatrically effective -- a dramatic story honestly told. The Living Newspaper must be credited with a pretty sensational beat." Writing for the Daily News, Burns Mantle called it "the most vital idea which has entered the American theatre in years."

Don't tell anyone I said so, but there is nothing really new about the operation of the Living Newspaper. It is merely a merger of radio program and topical movie, retaining the worst features of each. Yet it moves its audience and projects its thought as surely and as precisely as the most skillfully written and produced play. There is something vital and irresistable about the earnest re-enactment of socially significant news events by living actors which is completely missing in motion pictures or on the radio. What it is, I do not profess to know, but I recognize its potency and shudder to think of the uses to which it may be put by demagogues and propagandists when its manipulation is more thoroughly understood.

In *Triple-A Plowed Under* there is nothing to fear on this score. Its chief fault is not impartiality, but perhaps a too strict neutrality. Yet there is no escaping its implication. As unbiased history, its validity is secure; as theatre, it stumbles and treads on its own toes as often as not. Highly stylized scenes are followed immediately by others in the most realistic of treatments. Timing and phrasing are uncertain and inconsistent. Values are jumbled and the central *motif* often completely sidetracked. Nevertheless, it emerges as one of the most eloquent and moving productions of the American stage. With this experience to guide them, its directors should be able to move on to

something even more purposeful and effective before our program ends. *One run, one hit, pardonable errors.*

Concerning *Murder in the Cathedral* so much has been written that all of you, in Maine, and California, and Florida, probably know about it. In the New York Times, Brooks Atkinson wrote: "It would be difficult to find a play that offered greater problems of theatrical expression. There is nothing but spirit and perception to lay hold of. But Mr. Welles has conjured out of the choral chants and the violent imagery a moving and triumphant performance.....The Federal Theatre Project has supplied a troupe of actors who have met a rare opportunity with acting that is humbly moving and devout.....Mr. Eliot has written a liturgical play that most of us will never forget. The actors have turned figures of speech into vital sound and movement."

John Mason Brown, in the New York Post, said: No production of recent memory stands more in debt of its director and its designer than does *Murder in the Cathedral*. In his handling of the crowds, in the lovely fluidity of his choral groupings and in the visual excitement of those moments when his stage swarms with ominous lancers and red-robed assassins, Mr. Welles shows himself to be as resourceful as he is inventive. Mr. Cracraft's evocative arches and ever-serviceable platforms are no less contributive in turning the WPA production of Mr. Eliot's script into what finally proves to be one of the most notable theatrical offerings of the winter."

In the Herald Tribune, Howard Barnes wrote that the play "was presented by the Popular Price Theatre with vigor and imagination. Superbly staged, and ably performed, it testifies eloquently to the compelling power of poetry wrought to significant stage terms.....Altogether it is a superior job of showmanship."

This leaves little unsaid. If I were to add anything, I should say that in an age when beauty, like every other variation from type, is treated as a pathological symptom, it is heartening to witness the popular reception of this beautiful production. If, moreover, like one whose works are now burned in his native land, *auch ich war in Arkadien geboren*, I might let it go at that. But in America, in 1936, on a Work Relief project, I cannot but ask: Is beauty enough? Shouldn't our theatre also be functional? And causal?

One run, one hit, and -- oop! -- my error.

At this point the mighty *Macbeth* came to bat, and the spectators went wild. In fact they are still going wild. *Vide ut supra.* The scholarly critics, steeped in the tradition of the Bard, reviewed our Negro Theatre's production as a conventional revival. From this point of view most of them found it somewhat disappointing. And they were quite right, too. This is not Shakespeare, in the tradition of Irving and Booth and Macready. Perhaps it isn't even Shakespeare at all, except for his lines. But it is a rousing, riotous performance and a genuine joy to see. What if its brooding air of tragedy has been lost? This is not poetry, or literature, or even language. This is pure theatre -- Negro Theatre -- the kind that is instinctive and inspired. Like Ptolemaic astronomy, it is geocentric. Everything revolves about it -- including the mounted police who are necessary to hold back the crowds trying to buy tickets. *One run, one hit, and who cares about the errors?*

Shakespearean Audience in New York

Macbeth—At Lafayette Theatre

OUR COLLABORATORS

1. Mimeographers
2. Cleaners
3. Electricians
4. Painters
5. Boxoffice men
6. Stagehands
7. Costumers
8. Fly men
9. Property men
10. Carpenters

And hundreds of others whose work is not seen by the public, but is vital to the success of the Federal Theatre

Have You Read Any Good Plays Lately?

by Rosamond Gilder

Director of Research, National Project

■ Read (or written) any good plays lately? Comedy? Tragedy? Mystery? Melodrama? All the categories of Polonios, with vaudeville turns and marionette shows thrown in, are needed by the Federal Theatre Project, which spreads its tentacles from Maine to California. Hundreds and hundreds of plays have been read, analyzed and recommended by the New York staff of the Bureau of Research and Publication during the last four months — plays new and old, and of every size and quality — and still more are needed.

The Federal Theatre is undoubtedly a most astonishing producing organization.

For sheer size, variety and unprecedented organization problems, it is unique. The duties of the play-reader to such an institution are nothing if not strenuous. A theatre covering the entire country, with a personnel of over 12,000, with 200 theatres in operation and with every type of theatre production from circus and vaudeville through the legit and musicals to puppet and marionette shows within its scope, makes very special demands. Obviously no one group of play-readers, no matter how versatile and brilliant, can read scripts for such a widespread producing group. Every director is, perforce, play-reader-in-chief for his own unit. But the Play Reading Division of the Bureau, organized and run since last November by Elizabeth Hull, has met and coped with the avalanche of new scripts that descend daily on the Federal Theatre as a whole, and has built up an unique new-play service.

During the first months the hail storm was heavy. Every one carrying concealed manuscripts discharged them in the direction of this new thing called the Federal Theatre. These scripts were not always the cream of unproduced plays. Many were war-scarred veterans of the agents' lists, familiar to all play-readers on Broadway, which turned up hopefully once more. Then the flood of plays subsided; authors and agents alike were indulging in watchful waiting. It was all very well for enthusiasts on the project to insist that the Federal Theatre could produce the most difficult types of plays -- poetic, experimental, topical -- and produce them well. What was there to prove it? Nothing. Today the

Rehearsal Scene
Dance of Death
Poetic Theatre
New York City

Los Angeles

Chicago

scene has changed. With *Murder in the Cathedral*, the Negro *Macbeth*, *Chalk Dust*, *Triple-A Plowed Under* (to name only the New York successes), the tide has turned. Playwrights realize that though rentals may be small, the opportunity for a fine production is unusual. But the play must be good. The Federal Theatre wants the best in experimental, vivid, modern scripts.

Every script is given minute and careful study and an accurate, detailed report of it is kept. In order to insure a fair hearing and a variety of judgments, every play is read by at least three different people. These three people are chosen for the variety of their background and experience. If any one of the three readers recommends the play, it is then read again -- always with a view to what particular producing unit in the Federal Theatre might make use of it. The recommended play is then, with the consent of author or agent, immediately submitted to the producer on the project for whom it seems most appropriate, accompanied by the playreaders' analyses of the play and a synopsis and comment. The written "recommendation" of the play is also sent out in mimeographed form to every director and producer throughout the national project. The actual script must be returned, of course, to the author or agent as quickly as possible, from whom it can be obtained by any director interested.

In addition to recommending plays, the Play Reading Division keeps a complete record, in card form, of every play that has passed through the office. These cards carry in brief the same information as the sheet reports, but can be more easily checked and studied by a director looking for material. These may be consulted at 303 West 42nd Street, New York.

Now that the agonies of organization have subsided, one phase of the work which has been slow in taking shape is actually materializing. It is obvious that the Play Reading Division, to be really effective, must be a complete national and local clearing house. While the Division itself receives an enormous number of scripts, plays are also sent to the various directors on the Project. A system has now been established by which these scripts, referred to the Bureau by the directors, will be read and recorded in the central office and returned, with a synopsis attached, to the director within 24 hours. The value to every director on the Project of a completely documented central clearing house on new scripts is so obvious as not to need emphasizing. Reports on 552 new plays are available today and the number is growing steadily.

Play-readers everywhere on the project are urged to send in copies of their analyses to complete a master file of reports on original scripts. News concerning new scripts, when recommended by the directors of the region from which they come, will be sent on to other producers on the project.

A library of scripts of plays produced on the project is being inaugurated. It will contain at least two copies of every play, a first-night program, press notices, pictures, and so forth -- a complete record of the Federal Theatre productions.

The next issue of Federal Theatre *will contain an article on the Information Service on Produced Plays, another division of the Bureau.*

THE OTHER ART PROJECTS

by Mark Marvin

● ART PROJECT MURAL, CHILDREN'S THEATRE, ASTORIA, N.Y.

■ Theatre workers are notoriously single-tracked, therefore we are too likely to forget that the Federal Theatre is only one of four national projects in the field of the arts. Major projects are also being operated under the Works Progress Administration by the musicians, artists, and writers. Each of these projects has the same broad approach to its workers' problems, the same professional zeal and artistic integrity, and the same determination to serve the public as well as its own workers.

Just as the Federal Theatre Project has made theatre-going once again possible for the average man, so the music project, for example, has made public attendance possible at excellent low-cost concerts. Likewise the Art Project, in placing at work nearly every type of worker in the plastic and graphic arts, is accumulating for schools, libraries, hospitals, prisons, and other public buildings, works of great beauty and educational value. Moreover, in addition to its permanent gifts, the Art Project has arranged circulating art exhibits which are extremely useful and which are attracting deserved attention and acclaim. And the Writers Project, though less in the public eye because of the nature of its work, is engaged in creating a national guide book whose usefulness will only be appreciated generally after its appearance some months hence.

Federal Theatre workers will be particularly interested in two aspects of the Art Project which relate to our own work. The first is the construction of permanent miniature sets of Federal Theatre and other stage productions. The historical value of these permanent sets, which are complete even to the extent of being lighted, cannot be overestimated.

Secondly, the Art Project is doing research work in costume designs. Its workshops have already turned out replicas of the costumes of other periods. And, finally, as a major contribution of value to workers in every art field, the Art Project is creating an Index of American Design. This is a compilation and pictorial record of objects in the decorative, applied, and folk arts of this country. When completed it will provide a much-needed source book for artists, historians, and designers. The theatre project has been asked to compile the folders dealing with scene design.

Additional evidence of cooperation is to be found in this issue of *Federal Theatre*. The portraits on page 20 and the photograph on page 27 were made by the Art Project. All others are by Federal Theatre photographers. Don Freeman and Albert Carman, whose drawings appear in this issue, are Art Project Workers.

Besides its major activity of presenting various types of concerts -- popular, symphonic, band, etc. -- the Federal Music Project devotes much of its effort to direct cooperation with the Federal Theatre Project. To date fourteen units, with 192 musicians, have been assigned to the theatre, vaudeville, and circus units in New York City alone. Similar cooperation is reported by Federal Theatre directors throughout the country. Musicians, critics, and the public alike have acclaimed the return of the orchestra to pits emptied by the depression and "canned" music. The musical accompaniments thus made possible to such varied productions as *Macbeth*, *Triple-A Plowed Under*, and *Murder in the Cathedral* have added not only to the enjoyment but also to the theatrical projection of the mood

and tone of the scripts. One of the most successful California projects was *Tales from Hoffman*, a collaborative production. Several excellently interpretative incidental scores have already been written and continued cooperation between the two projects will do much to encourage composers to return to this neglected field. This is a prospect which every theatre worker and every musician will welcome.

The efforts of the Federal Writers Project are concentrated on a thorough guide book — the first on such a scale that has ever been compiled — of the United States. State guide books for each of the 48 states and an additional one for New York City are in preparation. When these are ready they will be further condensed into a compact five-volume work for general distribution.

The extent and thoroughness of the material being collected in New York City alone is indicated by the fact that some 7,000,000 words of information will be gathered by the time the guide is completed. From this total, some 225,000 words will be retained in the final draft. However, the valuable original researches included in the surplus wordage will not be wasted: a permanent collection of extreme importance to all students of New York history will be made of the gross work. Similarly, the information gathered throughout the country will be made available. In many places, writers' groups are placing the historic and regional material uncovered at the disposal of the playwrights.

A major section of the New York City guide book will be devoted to the theatre, music and the dance. The value of the contents of this section can be surmised from the summary of index headings now being prepared: Legitimate Theatre (past and present), Burlesque, Vaudeville, Little Theatre, Puppets and Marionettes, Children's Theatre, Social Theatre, Development of Stage Technique, Theatre Periodicals, Theatres and Plays on WPA, Theatrical Trade Unions, etc. That this material -- much of which is collected for the first time -- will be of interest to every theatre worker and theatregoer must be apparent.

From all over the country, similar reports of cooperation and mutual helpfulness continue to be heard. The four arts, made one by force of circumstances, are making history.

Experimental Productions

• • • Continued from Page 20 • • •

common to all ages. Hence, probably, the abstract background, the fancy dress costumes. Mr. Klavun has made the sawdust joke of human pretense as boisterous as possible -- in setting, costumes, dancing, business, lighting, stage tricks and music. The witty score was composed for this production by John Burrows, a young music student of Yale."

In Buffalo the Federal Theatre marionettes have become part of the safe driving campaign sponsored by the Buffalo Automobile Club. They have dramatized (from John S. Turner's radio script) the now famous article, *And Sudden Death*, by J.C. Furnas, first published in Readers Digest, under the title *Death Takes the Wheel*. They are showing it in parks, in school houses, in club halls, wherever the drivers of today or of the future may learn before it is too late.

Death himself presides over this grim yet wholesome show. His head covers the entire proscenium front as the audience gathers. A section of the curtain lowers as the action commences: Death's jaw drops. Then the tragedy is revealed.

First, voices are heard. The holiday voices of the driver and his companions -- a little too gay, a little too eager to pass the car in front, a little too impatient to get there. None of the drunks, the habitual light-passers, the cheery curve-takers. Everybody knows that they run into accidents. But we good-natured careless drivers. And when our eye wanders an instant, Death speaks and takes the wheel. The curtain lowers (in a dramatic theatre it would rise) and the consequence is revealed on the stage. Only with puppets could this be shown without sickening the audience. The real thing shown on the stage would be too horrible.

It is not only the careless driver who is warned. It is also the good-natured policeman who permits a speeder to pass without giving him a ticket. The Buffalo Chief of Police presided at the opening performance.

This is only one of several very novel and worth-while productions being presented by the Buffalo marionette group, some of whose audiences are pictured on the first page of this article, and on the preceding page.

CURTAIN CALLS BY MAIL

The following excerpts from a few of the many thousands of letters received are printed here, not in a spirit of boastfulness, but because we believe that Federal Theatre workers will go about their tasks with renewed faith and increased zeal after reading them. They refer, for the most part, to the lesser publicized units of the project, and reassure us that our work, even when inconspicuous, is valuable and appreciated.

• "The entertainment furnished by the Federal Theatre Project has been of high grade and, of course, of a therapeutic value. Also, I feel that these performances aid us in maintaining morale and discipline, and we would welcome them at any time." -- H. L. Paine, M. D., Supt., State Hospital, Grafton, Mass.

• "Our principals and teachers feel that the Project has provided a fine form of entertainment containing much of high educational value We hope the project may be continued." -- H. C Hartwell, Supt. of Schools, Buffalo, N. Y.

• "Just the thing for our boys and girls during these hard times and unemployment. It leads to better citizens and better and cleaner communities." -- H. E. Trentini, Treasurer, American Red Cross, Milford, New Hampshire.

• "Please accept my most hearty thanks for the (Bureau of Research and Publication) lists of plays which reached me this morning. These lists represent a splendid piece of work and I have already found them very useful in answering letters." -- Mabel F. Hobbs, Drama Consultant, Recreation School, New York.

• "It was a first-class show that reflected credit on the WPA organization as well as on the players themselves. We will be quite pleased to have it back here again." -- Newell A. Peavey, Lieut., USNR, Comd'g 142nd Co., CCC, Putnam, Conn.

• "It is the opinion of both the Faculty and the student body that these plays are not only thoroughly delightful and enjoyable, but also highly educational. We all sincerely hope that they may be continued indefinitely." -- John F. McNeill, Principal, Erasmus Hall High School, Brooklyn, N.Y.

• "We can note the satisfaction and contentment in the faces of our residents after one of these performances. We know that it is beneficial to them and we do hope these Vaudeville Units will continue to present shows at the various Institutions for a long time." -- John D. Beller, Supt., Jewish Home for Aged and Orphans, Worcester, Mass.

• "A well rendered performance and of positive educational value to the thousands of students who enjoyed it." -- Maurice E. Rogalin, Principal, Girls High School, Brooklyn, N.Y.

• "To men who are forced by circumstances to seek refuge in an institution, you can appreciate that professional talent, such as that of which the Unit that visited us is made up, seems a great deal in the lives of these shut-ins. I sincerely trust that your organization may continue to furnish these performances." -- Aime J. Forand, Commandant, Rhode Island Soldiers' Home.

• "A great help towards maintaining discipline and making the children happy and contented." -- Sister Mary Martin, St. Patrick's Orphanage, Manchester, New Hampshire.

• "The play, being a classic in English literature, was, of course, of distinct educational value, and the players did their part so well that our teachers and pupils who were present felt that they had been delightfully entertained." -- Ernest R. Von Nardroff, Principal, Stuyvesant High School, New York City.

• "This form of WPA activity is especially commendable. I expressed this in a recent letter to Senator David I. Walsh, in which I mentioned the (Federal Theatre) entertainment at the Home." -- R. M. Handy, Supt., Masonic Home, Charlton, Mass.

• "The performance.....was an excellent one. The pupils were enthusiastic. These presentations are of great value." -- Luella M. Burchan, Actg. Chairman, Dept. of English, James Monroe High School, New York City.

• "The townspeople were more than pleased as lots of them are unable to pay to see a show and I assure you it was of great value. The interest shown was remarkable. I also had the pleasure of going to Rutland Hospital for Veterans a couple of times with the Worcester Units and I know the Veterans gain lots of comfort out of these projects." -- Raymond Steik, Commander, American Legion Post #234, Northboro, Mass.

BUREAU of RESEARCH and PUBLICATION
303 West 42nd Street, New York City

PLAY LISTS AVAILABLE

● *This material is available without charge to W.P.A. directors and supervisors and to drama leaders of tax-supported, non-profit institutions.*

CHRISTMAS PLAYS....Twenty-four plays, medieval and modern. 10 cents

CLASSIC ENGLISH PLAYS....Fourteen plays from the best Early English dramatists. 10 cents

AMERICAN, ENGLISH AND IRISH PLAYS.... Thirty representative modern plays. 10 cents

MODERN CONTINENTAL PLAYS....Thirty-two landmarks in the continental theatre. 10 cents

EARLY AMERICAN PLAYS....Three plays representative of the period before 1800. 10 cents

LITTLE KNOWN ONE-ACT PLAYS....Seven Hans Sachs plays and five Gaelic plays in modern translation and adaptation. 10 cents

CHILDREN'S PLAYS....Forty plays recommended by a group of well-known educators. 10 cents

PLAYS FOR AMATEUR PRODUCTION.... Twenty-three plays easily produced and requiring small casts. 10 cents

NEGRO PLAYS....Eleven full-length plays dealing with Negro problems. 10 cents

ONE-ACT NEGRO PLAYS.... Fifteen social and economic plays dealing with particular Negro problems. 10 cents

SIX DEGREES OF CRIME....Outline of a melodrama representative of the early 19th century theatre. 10 cents

THE DISAPPOINTMENT or *THE FORCE OF CREDULITY*.... The first comic opera in America.
Playscript, complete with dialogue, business, music and lyrics. $1.00
Preliminary report, outlining the story and listing the music. 10 cents

REPORTS OF PLAY-READING DIVISION

● *If any director on the Federal Theatre Project has not received reports on the following plays, write at once for those you want. Address Elizabeth Hull, Bureau of Research and Publication, 303 West 42nd Street, New York.*

American Wing....by Talbot Jennings
More Died Than Men....by Paul Treichler
World Series....by Robert Ewing
The Eagle's Young....by Elise Jorard
The Happy Mountain....by Louis Walinsky
Kykunkor....by Asadeta Dafora Horton
One Angry Heart....by Stanley P. Young
Anti-Climax....by Harold Johnsrud
Hokusai....by Gustav Eckstein
49 Dogs in a Meat House....by E.P. Conkle
The List of Benefits.... by Yury Olesha
Windmills of Manhattan....by Judith and David Bublick
Ghost Town.... by Philo Higley
Nor All Your Tears....by Kate Horton
Cat Into Man....by Paul Eldridge
When I Think.... by Maxwell Selser
The Princess Runs Away....by Harry B. Smith and Geoffrey O'Hara
Brigham Young....by John McGee and Bernard Szold
Faint Perfume....by Zona Gale
No Abiding Place.... by Eleanor Flexner
Age of Gold.... William Mahl
Queen of Kings....by Charles Bruce Milholland
Ancient Gods....by Dorothy Nichols
John Henry.... by Frank B. Wells
The Spider....by Fulton Oursler and Lowell Brentano
Rock of Gibraltar....by Oriane Atkinson and Margaret Watson
That Side of Jordan.... by Herb Meadow

●

Volume 1 · Number 6

FEDERAL THEATRE

THE LIBRARY OF THE
FEB - 2 19
UNIVERSITY OF

Works Progress Administration

No.6

FEDERAL THEATRE

Bulletin of the Federal Theatre Project, Hallie Flanagan, Director • A division of the United States Works Progress Administration, Harry L. Hopkins, Administrator • Produced by the offset process.

303 West 42nd Street, New York MEdallion 3-3906

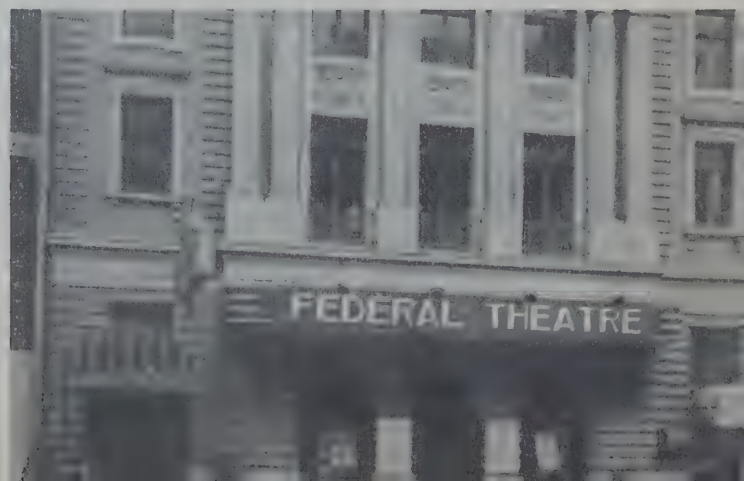
News

The People's Theatre....5
New York's Summer Season....7
Experiments in Simplification....9
America Sings....12
Men at Work: Midwest....13
That Dallas Tent Show....19
Program Notes: New York....20
There Were No Elephants on Relief....23
Cataloguing the World's Plays....27

Features

Frontispiece, *Family Circle*....4
Picture Page, Audiences....8
Color Plate, *I Confess*....15
Dallas Tent Show Photographs....18
Curtain Calls by Mail....29
Play Lists....Back Cover

Pierre de Rohan . . *Editor*



"FAMILY CIRCLE"

Don Freeman

The People's Theatre Grows Stronger

WPA Drama Continues to Make Theatrical History

• A Report of the Eighth Month

■ The People's Theatre. Family Circle. The story of our eighth month is told without our having to write a word. The headline reproduced in facsimile above appeared as a full-page streamer across the top of a recent Sunday News page by Burns Mantle, the most widely read of American theatre critics.

Don Freeman's drawing on the page facing this was made in one of the parks of New York City as a Federal Theatre company presented Gilbert and Sullivan in the open.

From Maine to Texas, the story is the same. From North Carolina to California, the same public recognition of our work is being bestowed.

"The People's Theatre!"----we did not call it that because only the people can make the name appropriate. But where and as the people make it appropriate, we welcome it as describing what the Federal Theatre should be.

With its eighth month completed, Federal Theatre "grows stronger" in the increasing general recognition of its social necessity, and of its ability to do its job. The Literary Digest recently said: "The greatest producer of theatrical hits is the Federal Government. It has four smashing successes in New York at one time."

And the Raleigh News-Observer: "The Federal Government is today the largest theatrical producer in the world, employing some 10,000 professional theatrical people, holding leases on a score of theatre buildings, and confounding the doubters with abundant proof that a governmentally subsidized theatre is the correct solution to both the immediate problem of finding employment for actors and allied workers and of stimulating and perpetuating a native American drama."

In point of quantity, Federal Theatre remains, of course, about as it was a month ago -- at the peak quota of employment, with about the same number of performances weekly. The trend of the month is toward a greater care for quality all along the line (the results will be perceptible presently). Plays, which in the early months often had to be chosen with one eye on the capacities of a quickly assembled cast and the other on the preferences of an audience strange to the spoken drama, are being more carefully picked, as our actors develop their latent abilities, to conform more closely to the spirit and objectives of Federal Theatre. Many units are making systematic training and coaching an integral part of their work. The New York City project for teaching theatre techniques opened on May 13 its first class to teach teachers, giving an intensive ten-week course in all aspects of play production to 30 of the 232 WPA drama coaches. A San Francisco unit is training

"Evening in Paradise"

A letter Received by a Federal Theatre Supervisor in New Hampshire

I am the happiest girl to have been chosen to write to you in the name of the Orphanage. Everyone is envious of me, because they too would like to give you an idea of how they enjoy your shows, especially your well-chosen songs which add a finishing touch to an evening in paradise.

From one performance to the other we do not stop thinking of what we saw and heard, then of the new shows to come. Some even try to imitate the actors. I can hear you laugh, it is really funny to see them try their best to make tricks or sing and so forth. You'll never guess how hard we try to behave since you've come to us with jolly troops.

For my part there would be no worse punishment than to be deprived of your show, and between you and me I have never tried to be so good as for the past three months. We are sure that the blessings of God will fall abundantly on you and also on your helpers who try so hard to please us and succeed very well. We are looking forward to see you all again. Rest assured that our prayers will follow our good friends everywhere.

One of your little friends,

RUTH LATOUR

St. Joseph's Orphanage
Nasnua, N. H.

Four Troupers
Follow The Parade
Los Angeles

itself after hours by the *commedia dell' arte* method of improvising dialogue and action to stories and legends of the region supplied by the research project. Many of our vaudeville projects are working incessantly to create new combinations, original situations, and dialogue pointing to the new variety entertainment of the future, rather than to that of the past, which was buried ten years ago.

Federal Theatre now has, for the most part, moved out of doors for the summer. Here the economy of physical production, which has been one of our guiding principles, is proving doubly advantageous, along with the added appeal to the imagination which the scenery of suggestion fosters. In addition to plays with living actors, 27 marionette units in 15 cities will soon be drawing the kids nightly from the streets to the parks.

The eighth month has firmly established the fact that the Federal Theatre is drawing a new audience. That is, not merely the audience which up to ten years ago used to patronize the road show and the local stock company -- both inferior replicas of that peculiarly local and circumscribed theatre produced on Broadway. Federal Theatre is not "restoring" the road and the resident stock company. It is drawing, and month by month building, a new audience.

Richard Lockridge, theatre critic of the New York Sun, describes this new audience, as he has observed it in New York, as follows: "The WPA, if it has done nothing else, has brought into the legitimate playhouse a new, vociferous and rather engaging audience. (The WPA theater, as a matter of fact, has done a good bit more than the commercial theater during recent weeks). It is an audience which is not, I suspect, overfamiliar with the stage of flesh and blood and it has had moments of rather startling naivete. But it is an engaging audience. Its face is not frozen, it is not sitting on its hands, when it hisses it is not self-conscious and when it cheers it means it. It is young, lively, and I suspect, hard up. Probably the low admission fees charged at the WPA plays have had a large part in bringing it out of the neighborhood movie house....It is an eager audience. It goes to the theater only partly to pass the time. It goes, evidently, expecting to hear something said....It is enlivening to be one of a first-night WPA audience in Manhattan."

This is the audience which spends 25 or 55 cents because it expects to get something of value, something which it feels is beautiful or important to its own life. This audience is far larger than the audience which supports the Broadway theatre.

Back in 1912, Irving Berlin described the elite of this world as

"Dukes and Earls and Russian Czars,
Men who own their motor cars."

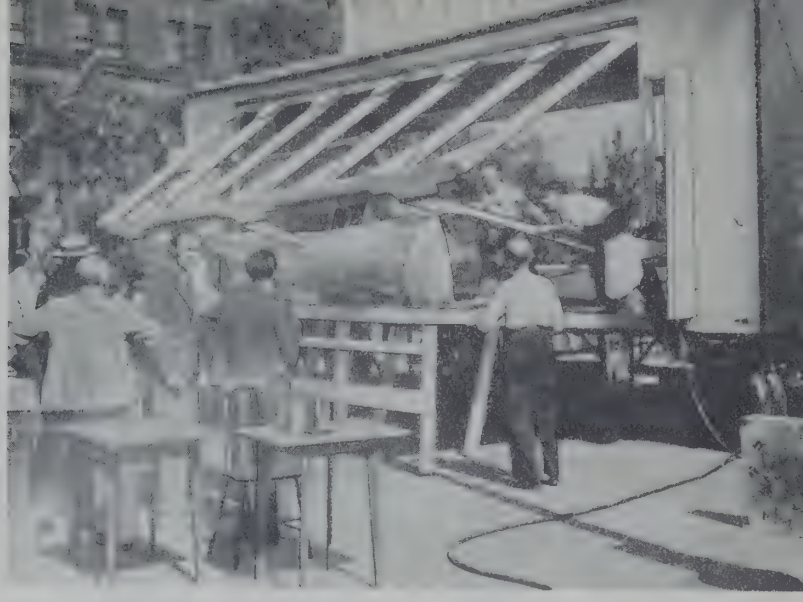
The market for $2,000 cars was limited. Henry Ford proved that the market for $500 cars was not four times as great but twenty times as great.

Only two years ago, to say that a man went to the theatre every week was practically equivalent to saying that he was rich. It was pretty much the same thing as owning your own motor car was back in 1912. But the audience which can spend 55 cents for a theatre ticket is not four times, but twenty times as large as the audience which can spend $2.00 and more. And the audience which can spend 25 cents is still larger in geometrical proportion.

Twenty-five to fifty-five cents is the now established price scale of dramatic entertainment in America. Federal Theatre is bringing back the stage on the only basis that is today economically sound. It is broadening the base of the American theatre twenty times over, and by that token is making it so much the more American.

Our most urgent task now is to make our theatre worthy of this audience. It is of no value whatever to stimulate theatre-going unless, once inside our doors, our audiences see something which has some vital connection with their own lives and their own immediate problems. It is, therefore, the obvious duty of the Federal Theatre to produce more plays and fewer shows, and the ninth month should bring increasing evidence of our determination to do this duty.

Outdoor Season Begins in New York



by Mayer Portner

■ The summer season of the New York City project opens with a schedule of open-air productions designed to take the living theatre into every borough and neighborhood of the metropolis, and to offer to theatregoers a variety of programs covering almost the entire range of the stage.

Portable stages, designed and built by Cleon Throckmorton, supervisor of the Federal Theatre Workshop, form the nucleus of the transportation system to be used. These will be augmented by formal stages erected in the city's parks, and by a mammoth circus-vaudeville project under canvas.

The basic plan is to establish six theatre sites in each of the five boroughs making up the greater city. Productions traveling by trucks will play each of the six sites in one borough on the six successive nights of a week, then move on the next borough. This will provide a change of bill at each theatre site each night of the week, and a complete change of programs for the entire borough once a week.

Among the sites first chosen were the Mall in Central Park and Washington Square Park, Manhattan; Franz Siegal and Crotona Parks and the Pelham Rice Stadium, Bronx; Prospect Park, Brooklyn; Forest, Kings and Astoria Parks, Queens; Silver Lake Park, Staten Island. By the time this reaches print, the remaining sites will have been chosen by the Federal Theatre Booking Office and the Park Department of New York City.

The productions selected so far for the touring units are: *The Barker*, by Kenyon Nicholson, directed by George Ermoloff; *The School for Scandal*, by Sheridan, directed by George Vivian; The African Dancers, directed by Momadu Johnston; two vaudeville unit shows under the supervision of Frank Merlin.

Other productions being readied for the outdoor truck-stages include: *Memories on Parade*, a vaudeville revue; *The Emperor's New Clothes*, a Children's Theatre production; one group from the dance unit, supervised by Don Oscar Becque; and several additional dramatic plays yet to be selected.

Scheduled for early booking into the formal outdoor theatres are *The Emperor's New Clothes*, The African Dancers, *We Live and Laugh*, an intimate revue in Yiddish, and the German Theatre's productions of *Der Zerbrockene Krug* and *Die Apostel*.

The theatres on wheels being used this summer are approximately 30 feet long, and each carries an entire production, including scenery, props, a portable switchboard, and stage crew. They are mounted on trailers which can be pulled to location by any available car or truck, which then can be used for other purposes until time to move again.

One side of each trailer is lowered to form a stage apron. The other side lowers to form the rear of the stage. End pieces fall into place and create a working space 22 feet long, 20 feet deep and 13 feet high.

Six spots and strips of three-color sectional borders and footlights are standard electrical equipment, being controlled from a portable switchboard which also operates four 1000-watt and two 500-watt dimmers. Besides the master switch, there are ten circuit switches for effects.

To economize on space and to accelerate scene changes, drops have been designed for double duty, being painted on both sides. That is, each drop serves for two sets.

Most of the theatre sites selected have stadiums or natural amphitheatres with seating capacities ranging from 2000 to 20,000. Amplifiers will be used wherever necessary. It is estimated that during the 15-week outdoor season, more than two million people will witness these free presentations, and it is hoped that an appreciable percentage of this audience will be sufficiently impressed by the performances to become permanent, paying patrons of the living theatre thereafter.

On The
Other Side of
Federal Theatre
Footlights
MACBETH
UBANGI CLUB

Scenes from *Die Apostel*
German Theatre, New York

EXPERIMENTS IN SIMPLIFICATION

by Michael Garnett

■ While public attention has been focused on Federal Theatre units with Broadway houses, some of the less conspicuous groups of the New York project have moved steadily forward with experimental programs which may prove to be of permanent value to the American theatre. Most of the innovations have been in setting, costuming, lighting and production, but at least one new directorial formula -- the "theatre of non-illusion" -- has been developed, as well as several interesting treatments of play material.

John E. Bonn, director of the German Theatre, is responsible for the experimentation toward a theatre of non-illusion, and the current two-play repertory of this group illustrates two distinct approaches, both springing, however, from a single conviction.

It is Mr. Bonn's major hypothesis that present-day audiences are too alert, too aware, to accept the theatre of escape which has dominated the stage since the days of the French Revolution. He contends that under the social system which collapsed along with its economic theories in 1929, there were no major problems in which a playwright could interest his audience, only psychological problems of individual adjustment. Prosperity audiences wanted to identify themselves with the action of the dress theatre of illusion; depression audiences want to compare the stage action with their own experiences -- to find enlightenment, not escape.

To create this sort of theatre Mr. Bonn adapts and combines the methods of the Shakespearean, Chinese and Japanese theatres. His actors never quite complete characterization. Up to the point of reasonable credibility, they are the characters they portray. Beyond this they are mechanical vehicles for theatrical projection, constantly reminding the audience that it is merely witnessing a play.

In Rudolph Wittenberg's satirical peace play, *Die Apostel*, illusion is shattered by over-acting, by extravagant characterization, grotesque costumes and settings, mechanized movement, and by ribald, mocking off-stage music. The whole thing becomes a huge joke - a joke at the expense of those who think that wars can be prevented by the good intentions of individuals.

In Kleist's eighteenth-century comedy, *Der Zerbrockene Krug*, emphasis is shifted from the embarrassment of a rascally judge as an individual to contrast between the sturdy, honest peasant class and the already decaying bourgeoisie, exemplified by its corrupt judicial system. This is achieved by studied gaucherie, by over-characterization which in reality is incomplete characterization, since its exaggerations constantly call attention to its make-believe qualities.

While Mr. Bonn's direction incorporates to some extent the brilliant color and exaggerated characterization of the Vakhtangov theatre, it by no means achieves the same formal results. He also utilizes, though infrequently, a bio-mechanical formula not unlike that of Meyerhold, as well as the stately formality of the Nō play, which of course becomes gro-

tesquerie in a Western setting. Yet none of these can be said definitely to have influenced his ultimate projection. This stands alone as an individual contribution to the theatre of today -- a contribution in which it were a pity that any should fail to share - English-speaking Federal Theatre audiences as well as the limited nationality group to which it now plays.

◆

Perhaps the most interesting innovations in settings and costumes were those introduced by the Yiddish Intimate Theatre. These were notable not only for their beauty and appropriateness, but particularly for their economy and utility.

The scenery, designed by Andrei Hudiakoff, consisted almost entirely of small, movable set-pieces, slightly grotesque in design, brightly colored, and extremely flexible of manipulation. Many of these were multiple-purpose pieces, with hinged easels that dropped to provide additional scenes. In lieu of a treadmill or endless belt to simulate motion, in one number set-pieces were rolled slowly across the stage by hand, only one grip being required for each piece. Seldom was more than one small piece, against a black velvet cyclorama, drop or close-in, needed to project the necessary background for a scene.

There is nothing particularly new about suggestive scenery, but seldom has it been realized more effectively than in this revue. Economical, vivid and simplified stage expression of this sort is what Federal theatres need, not only in decor, but in writing, acting and directing.

Emile Stoner achieved results almost as gratifying in costuming the Yiddish play. Basic costumes of neutral grey -- dresses for the women, suits and sweaters for the men -- provided foundations upon which every costume in the entire program was created by the addition of aprons, shawls, cuffs, hats, coats, boots, etc. The entire wardrobe cost probably was less than would be required for a single number in a Broadway production, yet nothing was lacking in the ultimate effect.

Mr. Hudiakoff also designed the sets for the Children's Theatre production of *The Emperor's New Clothes*, another ingenious and imaginative *projet*. Aiming, in these, for grotesque effects appealing to youthful imaginings, he used black textile screens and brightly painted lathes and streamers as his principal materials. The same designer created unusually appropriate costumes for the children's play.

◆

Another designer who has shown commendable ingenuity and resourcefulness in creating scenic investiture in the spirit desired of Federal Theatre productions is Samuel Leve, who designed the settings for the German Theatre and the One-Act Experimental group. For *Die Apostel*, already described as having been broadly burlesqued, the sets were simple flats decorated in comic-strip style, and bizarre little set-pieces which were more props than scenery. For *Der Zerbrockene Krug* a stylized rococo *motif* was employed, finding its way into architectural forms as well as purely decorative material. No attempt was made to simulate realism, the designer striving rather to indicate and suggest, thus reminding the audience constantly but unobtrusively of the machinery of the stage.

Mr. Leve's sets for the three-play program of the One-Act Theatre embraced a wide range of design, yet had much in common. For Moliere's *The Miser* he was given the task of providing a third dimension for a piece customarily played against a backdrop. He achieved this by the use of secret doors, stairways and panels, broken levels, and a chute. In effect his scenic background was a machine with which the actors manufactured comedy.

For Shaw's *The Great Catherine*, materials were used instead of paints to recreate the semi-Oriental opulence of the eighteenth-century Russian court. Vivid red velvets, ostrich plumes and shiny black Chinese lacquer were spread upon multiple-purpose screens which were reversed, rearranged and draped to set four scenes.

For EmJo Basshe's *Snickering Horses*, innovations were principally in economy of space and materials, and adaptability to stages of various sizes.

Although bookings for this unit were discontinued, its productions introduced a num-

Children's Theatre, New York

ber of innovations worth remembering and trying again. One was the synchronization of light cues to the rhythmic tempo of the Basshe piece, the effect being that of a color-organ played in harmony with an orchestra.

Other interesting essays by this group were the changes of pace and mood used in telescoping the Moliere farce into a one-act piece, the interpolation of movement into the talky Shaw script, and the creation of a 25-minute three-dimensional play from a monologue fragment culled from *The Thunder Clock*.

◆

Thanks largely to the splendid cooperation of the Music Project, a great deal is being done to restore music to its essential place in the theatre. The most conspicuous recent example of this reintegration probably was the effective score supplied by Clair Leonard for the Poetic Theatre's *The Dance of Death*, which was equally as important as the script, and even more intelligible to an American audience.

For the German *Die Apostel*, Musical Director Alfred Russ created a score which is unique in that it has no independent value as music, since it synchronizes with and accents every line and movement-cue of the play. It is not descriptive but derisive, mocking the speeches and gestures of the actors. It is played offstage, and the acting is rigidly stylized to its tempo.

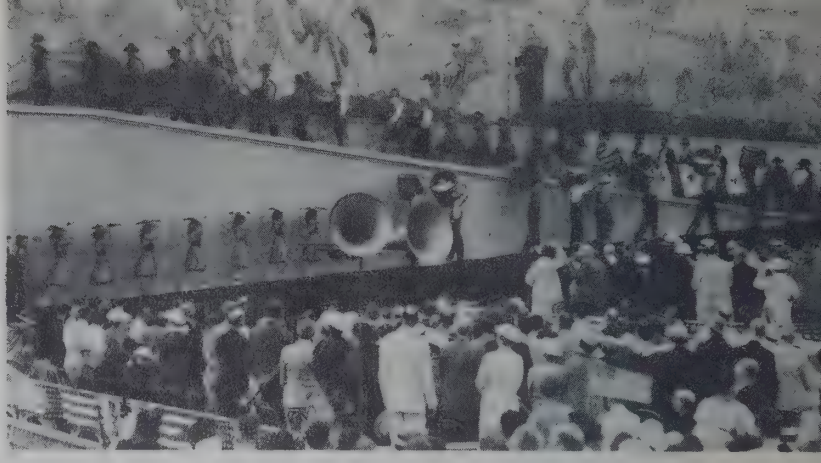
For the Yiddish Intimate revue, Musical Director Maurice Rauch has adapted and arranged traditional racial melodies for most of the numbers, and where original compositions were necessary, has created them in the style of the rest of the score. This music forms a connecting link between the conventional Jewish theatre and the modern Broadway revue, the characteristics of both being combined in *We Live and Laugh*, the Yiddish revue.

Scene From
We Live and Laugh

Yiddish Intimate Theatre
New York

'AMERICA SINGS'

by Charles H. Meredith
State Director, Federal Theatre of Texas



In the Arkansas Federal Theatre spectacle, *America Sings*, presented on the occasion of President and Mrs. Roosevelt's visit to Little Rock, June 10th, the Federal Theatre again departed from the dully traditional by injecting significant social comment into the proceedings.

This vigorous note, plus incidents of meaningful comedy throughout the episodes, turned what we have become accustomed to consider a dull, sentimental, prettified theatreform into an exciting experience. One soon forgot that the President's physical presence in Little Rock was the springboard for the enterprise because one was so keenly aware that here, probably for the first time in history, the social philosophy of the President of the United States had furnished such inspiration to a group of workers in the theatre that the production transcended its medium.

The National Director, Hallie Flanagan, was present at the pageant and probably will report it herself. Therefore this review should be considered merely as a preliminary account.

John McGee, Assistant to the Director, Federal Theatre Project, and Miss Frances Nimmo Greene composed the libretto of *America Sings*. Fred Morrow, the director, staged each episode with such vitality and skill that the action acquired significance -- no small accomplishment, as some 1600 members of the community composed the cast. The high level of inventiveness was also apparent in the setting. Instead of the usual stage-like playing space and realistic background, the action took place on a series of ramps and platforms going from the ground up to a height of 30 feet. Across the top a strikingly composed mural designed and executed by William H. Perkins, established the historical continuity of the episodes. Beginning on the right with the Indian sun-worshippers and ending in skyscrapers and modern means of locomotion, not omitting the short-skirted, cocktail-drinking, jazz dancers of the post-war period, the setting was a welcome relief from the usual young ladies in gauze tripping through an abandoned cow pasture.

The first episode depicted an Indian ceremonial and the advent of the first white explorers; in the second came the pioneers to build new communities. The fun began when the pioneers were followed by their gaudier brethren toting huge bottles labeled "Triple X"; others, huge playing cards, all aces; then the dancing girls in abbreviated, lurid costumes and after them the preachers and the representatives of law and order. Next came scenes of the leisurely, carefree ante-bellum South, interrupted by the call to war, the humor of this episode being provided by a large group of Negro cotton pickers, singing and dancing. Then the Union soldiers and the hostile encampments singing their songs.

The end of the war and the ensuing national spirit called forth applause and cheers from the 50,000 spectators as the Blue and the Gray joined ranks and marched side by side.

In the next episode the sturdy sun-bronzed CCC camp boys acted out the laying of the transcontinental railroads. The rapid industrial and agricultural development moved swiftly up to America's participation in the World War. When the fifth and final episode showed us the return of the crippled veterans, the marching Gold Star mothers, no one failed to notice the well-groomed gentleman with the money bags who followed. Then came the "crash", climaxing swiftly in ensuing social dissolution: unorganized protests, threats of revolution and violence. This threat was stilled by now familiar lines from the first "fireside chat" of our present chief executive that brought new hope and new inspiration for common effort to a distracted people. America works. America plays. *America Sings.*

As President and Mrs. Roosevelt were leaving the stadium, a white choir sang to them from their left at one end of the pageant structure, followed by a spiritual from a Negro choir at the opposite end. I was fortunate enough to be near the President and I have never seen such genuine enjoyment, such sympathetic appreciation, such sensitive understanding of the realities and the implications of this cooperative effort, staged by the Federal Theatre Project and the Arkansas Centennial Commission, assisted by the Federal Music Project and artistically skilled members of the community.

MEN AT WORK : MIDWEST

by Hallie Flanagan, National Director

■ A frieze for the Assyrian Hall of Archaeology of the Field Museum is one of the many commissions being executed by the Federal Art Project of Chicago: small Assyrian seals are photographed, enlarged, executed first graphically, and finally in stone. The various skills of stone cutters, sculptors, photographers, pen and ink artists, engravers, and research workers, thus salvaged, assembled, and engaged, epitomize the human engineering necessary to fuse various talents to the end of useful work -- work which has lasting value for the public. In the same shop stone cutters are making a fountain for the Elgin State Hospital for the Insane; sculptors are executing animal figures for the Brookfield Zoological Gardens; architects are completing models for playgrounds on the lake side; painters are experimenting with impressionistic backgrounds for a series of educational dioramas for the public schools.

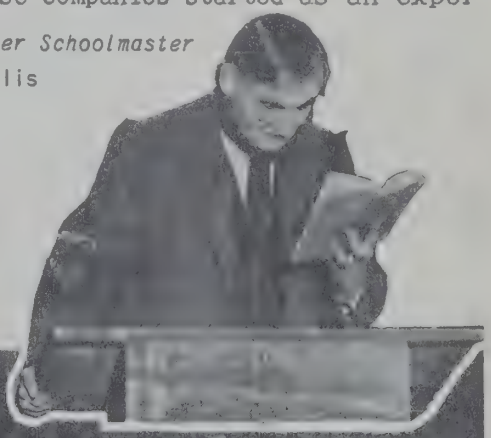
Music is being played for the people. Frederick Stock conducts a Federal orchestra concert which brings a great audience cheering to its feet; and the Chicago Park Board, recognizing one function of the Federal Theatre companies, offers to build them six out-of-doors stages along the lake shore.

What are these theatre companies and what is their function?

In a new novel, *The Trouble I've Seen*, Marty Gellhorn tells an episode of two slum children, little girls twelve and eleven. The elder one promises mysteriously to take the other one "somewhere where it's fun". The somewhere proves to be a Holy Roller meeting and the eleven-year-old is frightened by the squirming, sweating bodies of people tossed in an agony of prayer, by the hoarse shouts of men and women as the Holy Ghost descends upon them. "It's awful -- I wanna go home," she whispers, and outside in the stale darkness of the tenement night she says again, "It's awful -- Minnie May -- why do you go there?" "Where else kin I go? You can't just go to bed every night all the time. Gotta go somewheres. That's the only place I know it don't cost nothin'."

One function of the Federal Theatre is to see that in every city and town in America where Federal funds are being used for theatre development, the Minnie Mays have some place to go. No shows that we do are more important than these shows for youth, not only from the humanitarian point of view, but from the theatre point of view. For here is a potential audience not only for us, but for the theatre in general, provided that once inside our theatres they see something funny, true, beautiful, or exciting.

It is largely this audience of youth which attends the vaudeville shows of the Federal Theatre companies routed through the Chicago parks. "These companies started as an exper-



● *The Hoosier Schoolmaster*
Indianapolis

● Vaudeville
Omaha

iment," Mr. V. K. Brown and Mr. Walter Roy, park commissioners, said. "Frankly, we thought Chicago crowds were interested only in the movies. We put the federal companies in three of our hundred and thirty-two parks, but we found that we couldn't accomodate the crowds. Now, with nine companies playing every night, we still haven't enough. Men come with their entire families -- wife, children, mother-in-law; unemployed youths come with their best girls; school-children who have heard of living actors but have never seen them. These audiences are having a good time, and that's what we want."

On these park companies, comprising 385 of the 680 people on the Chicago payroll, the expense to the Federal government is now only one and seven-tenths percent above actual labor costs, the park system paying production costs, including rent, light, heat, scenery, and costumes. The new stages will in some cases be built out over the water, and will be equipped with public address systems, excellent light facilities, and portable unit settings.

The summer stages follow the line of the lake, at the focal centers where great crowds, many of them foreign-born, congregate. Some idea of the potential audience may be gained from the fact that the Foster Avenue Beach during July and August accomodates 100,000 people a day; the Belmont Avenue, 75,000; the North Avenue, 200,000; the 12th Street Beach, 25,000; and the 33rd Street, 35,000. The Jackson Park Beach has 125,000, and the Calumet Park, 25,000 a day. Here, late in the summer the Federal Theatre Project will stage for the Park Board a series of folk festivals for the Chicago settlements of Swedes, Norwegians, Italians, Czechs, Poles, Hungarians, Chinese, Japanese, Egyptians, Indians, and Persians.

So exciting a project and so large a potential audience puts a great burden of proof on the performers, and Mr. George Kondolf, new director for Chicago, Mr. Kendall Davis, director for Illinois, and Mr. Kenneth Carrington, in charge of vaudeville, are now engaged in stepping up the quality of these shows to the end that the people who see them will want to see others.

Six other Chicago projects are in operation: the Americana company, playing at the Blackstone under Harry Minturn in such plays as *The Texas Steer*, *Secret Service*, and *Three Wise Fools*; an Experimental Theatre playing under the direction of Theodore Viehman at the Great Northern, currently in *Chalk Dust*, and rehearsing *Triple-A Plowed Under* (directed by Gordon Graham from the New York *Triple-A* staff); a Negro company, under Marie Merrill, playing in *Did Adam Sin?*, and, emboldened by the success of *Macbeth*, rehearsing *Everyman*. A Laboratory Theatre group, just organized under Theodore Robinson and Peter Koessler, is rehearsing a new script by a Chicago author, *Cry for Life*; and two other groups, the Dance Group under Diana Huebert and the Pageant Group under Alfred Sturry recently helped to stage a six day collaborative show of the four arts, held at the International Amphitheatre - an exposition of youth, including athletics, music, dance, and drama.

High school students in Omaha are going to the theatre. In South Omaha, the packing house district, Poles, Hungarians and Mexicans chose as the favorite Federal Theatre shows, *The Clod*, by Rex Beach, and a vaudeville performance, *Andy and Win*. In the Benson High School, Swedes and Danes also liked *The Clod*, as well as a program of Negro spirituals and Negro jazz with a 35-piece orchestra from the Federal Music Project. These shows are part of a rotating stock plan of Miss Alice Howell and Mr. Oscar Lieben, and include three companies: in addition to the above, a symphony orchestra and a production of *The Dictator* by Richard Harding Davis.

The routing is not only through schools but into outlying villages, such as Waterloo and Valley. In this last, a town of 1000 people, 800 tried to get in to see *The Dictator*, the first play ever given in that community.

These three Federal Theatre units, a dramatic company and two vaudeville groups, have played to 18,000 school children in Omaha and its suburbs. Ninety percent, according to statistical studies made by the director, have never seen a play, and could not believe that these actors were really not moving pictures. They clapped until the actors had to give eight curtain calls, and even then the children refused to go home. Our Nebraska Federal Theatre is specializing in a theatre for youth, and is cooperating with the parent-teachers' associations to work out plays suitable for grade children. Mr. Lieben, the director, tells me that the civic organization "Ak-Sar-Ben" has offered to build an out-of-doors stage to house the company for summer stock, and that they hope to continue on a larger scale their special plays for children.

Men at work in Milwaukee -- German, Polish, Croatian, Jewish, Irish, Italian, French, Bohemian, Spanish, Russian, Danish, and Norwegian -- at work on a striking succession of plays -- *Green Grow The Lilacs*,

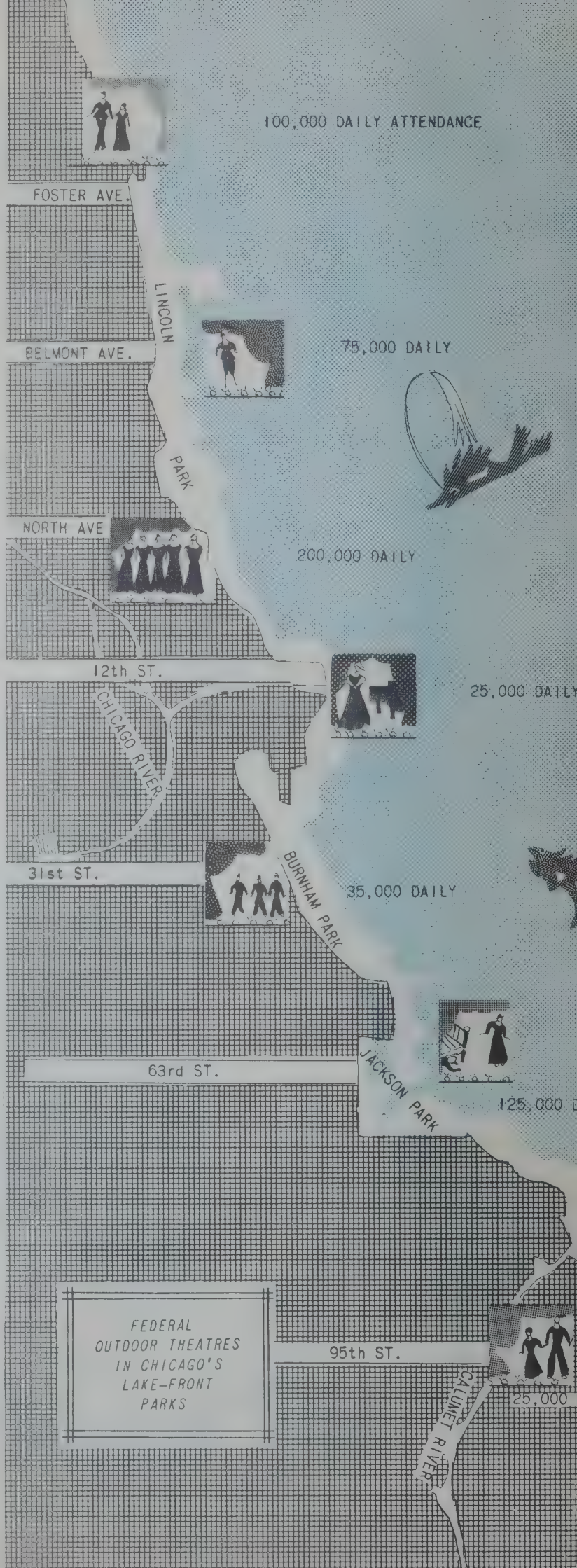
Scene from *I Confess*, Detroit Federal Theatre

Outside Looking In, *The Last Mile*, and *Behold This Dreamer*. I saw the group go through its final rehearsal of *The Mask and Face*, by L. Chiarelli, under the crisp and authoritative direction of Paul Norris, and I have not seen on any of our stages more varied and interesting types or more deft playing of this difficult form of farce comedy. Perhaps it is because this is the fifth play in which the company has appeared together that you get the sense of a ball tossed in the air; perhaps its skillful playing is the result of the varied background of the players, which includes the London Gate Theatre, the original American company of *Old Heidelberg*, the New York company of *Blossom Time*, the original company of *Street Scene*, the Dublin Abbey, and, through Boris Glagolin, the Moscow Art Theatre. The theatre performers gain verve from the fact that the excellent vaudeville unit works with the dramatic company, the members of both groups playing interchangeably The Davidson Theatre, an attractive playhouse for both dramatic attractions and foreign films, houses our dramatic company, as well as our vaudeville unit.

The remarkable cooperative feeling of the group is perhaps an enlargement of the personality at the center of it, Mrs. Laura Sherry, State Director. She introduced me before the rehearsal to the entire company, including actors, technicians, stagehands, ticket-takers, ushers, tailors -- everyone on the project -- by name, saying a word or two about the place of each one in the organization and often about the mixture of races, creeds and political faiths. "Henry is a Republican", she said, "but his scenery holds together just as well as that built by his assistant, who is a Socialist. We have all kinds of political leanings in this theatre -- progressives, conservatives and even one Communist."

According to the Des Moines Register of May 18, 5000 persons, mostly children, attended the first open air performance of Iowa's Federal Theatre unit; the paper commented especially on the delight of the children at the circus and vaudeville acts. Mr. C. W. Jeffries, director, is working with the educational advisors of various CCC camps in planning extensive tours.

Missouri has two companies, a dramatic one with W. B. Stone in Kansas City, and a vaudeville unit under Charles Moran in St. Louis. Altnough recently founded, both of these companies have played extensively before Orphanages, Homes for the Aged, Parent-Teacher organizations, social settlements, and are shortly to extend their usefulness on a tour



through the state. I shall not forget the experience of seeing our Missouri vaudeville troupe perform on the lawn of the City Insane Asylum of St. Louis; nor can words of mine do justice to the gallantry and resourcefulness of that troupe as they acted with a zest and precision which made an audience of some four hundred tormented people forget themselves for a time in laughter.

The vaudeville unit is in St. Louis. Our Kansas City drama company plays principally in the villages and small towns of the surrounding agricultural country, with populations ranging from a handful to 5000. A substantial proportion of the audiences is made up of young men and women from 16 to 25 who, in thousands of cases, had never witnessed a theatrical production until Federal Theatre companies came along. A majority of the adults, too, report that they had seen no living actors for many years.

Ohio has five Federal Theatre units: Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Toledo, and Dayton, under the direction of Walter Mountjoy and Franklin Raymond. The Cincinnati vaudeville unit is touring nearby Kentucky towns and villages. Toledo is negotiating for a showboat; Cleveland, now in production, after a Living Newspaper of its own, on *Triple-A Plowed Under*, is working with Toledo and Cincinnati on a schedule of open air productions in summer stock.

Indiana, under the direction of Lee Norvelle, affords an example of the diversity of activity possible with a small Federal Theatre unit. With 80 people on the payroll, the Indianapolis theatre has so far produced nine paid admission performances, at first specializing in Indiana material, *The Hoosier Schoolmaster, Clarence*; later including *Behold This Dreamer, The Trial of Mary Dugan, The Royal Family*. Meantime, the vaudeville units have played before many groups such as the CCC camps at Lebanon, Nashville, and Frankton; before the Pocahontas Lodge, American Legion Post, and the United States Veterans' Hospital.

In Gary, Indiana, a Children's Theatre under Betty Lyman in cooperation with the Youth Administration operates a theatre for children from the steel mill district. The various racial groups act in material from their own folk lore: *Reygoch*, a Croatian story for the Croatian children; a masked Greek play for the Greek children; the various groups meeting in an opening and closing ceremonial based on the American flag. To the adult mind this mixture may seem incongruous, but it's all right with the children of Gary.

Any work in the arts is apt to seem pallid in comparison with Detroit itself. I can think of no city so essentially dramatic in the sense that it is full of conflict, contrast and underlying struggle. Contrast Grosse Point, where they give away polo ponies and pearls as favors at dinner parties, with River Rouge, where the bread line has become so usual a sight that it blends with the railroad shanties as a part of the landscape, and you get some conception of how strong a dramatic attraction would have to be to compete with reality.

The Detroit Federal Theatre, starting with *Liliom*, went on with its second bill to *I Confess*, an original play by William Beyer. This is an amusing satire on the "Confession" and "True Story" type of writing so popular in America today. The technique of alternating realistic scenes with the imagined scenes of the confessions, excitingly conceived by the author, is emphasized with the skillful designs of Stephen Nastfogel. Mr. Nastfogel is one of the many people in this company with brilliant theatre background. Among other notable productions he has designed the settings for the American premiere of *Man and the Masses* and *Liliom* for the Theatre Guild.

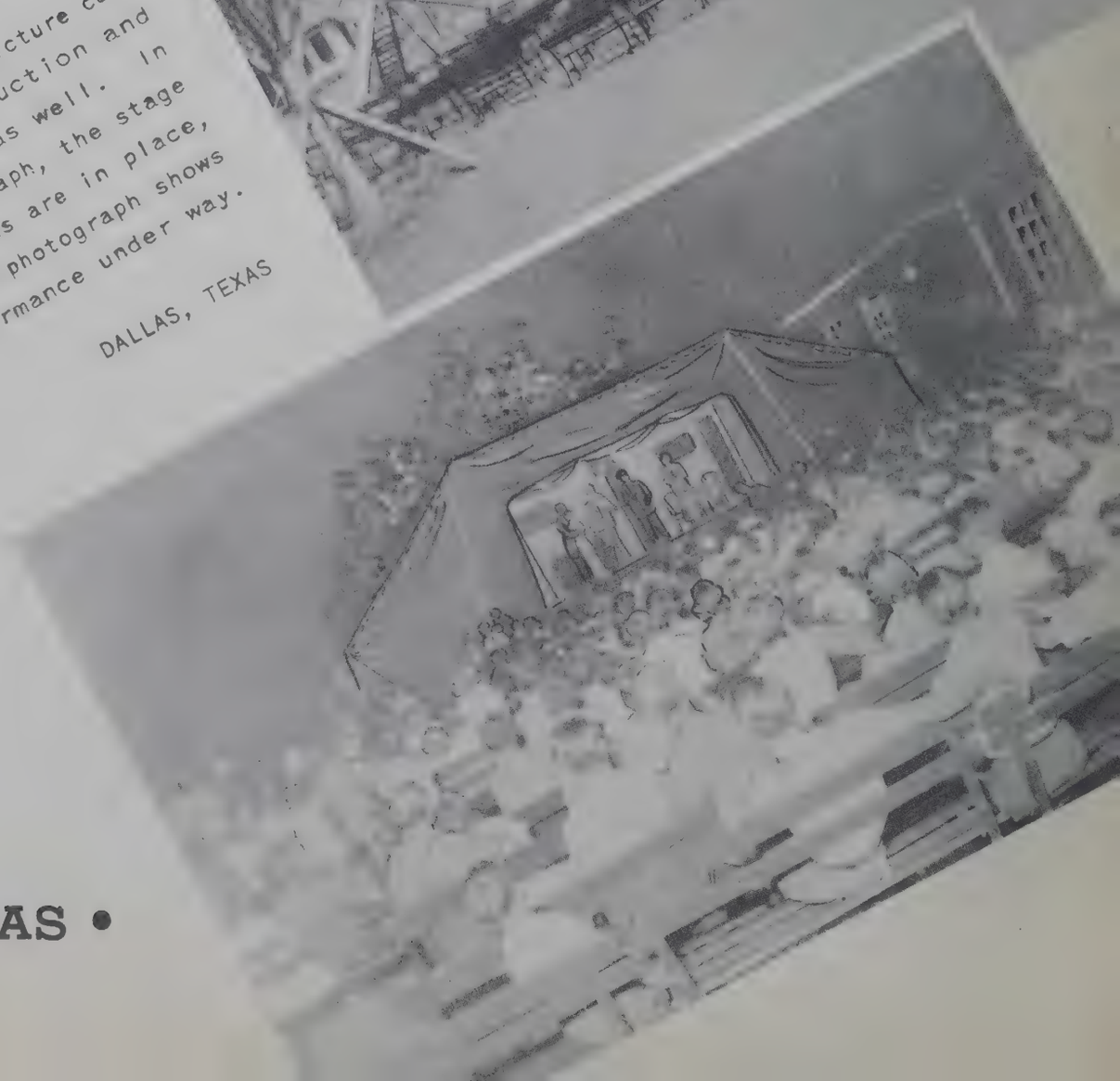
As this unit, recently organized, gets under way under the direction of Walter Mountjoy, we may hope for an historic drama -- perhaps the American epic of Henry Ford; perhaps a modern *Melting Pot*.

I look at the map of the United States these days as I never looked at it before, for the Federal Theatre Project has geographic implications which we are only beginning to realize. I look out of train windows, and in Iowa, Illinois, Alabama, Connecticut, I see Minnie Mays sitting on railroad ties. I look down from an airplane on the neat relief map which is Utah, Montana, Wyoming, the Dakotas, and remember the letter saying, "Why can't Wyoming have a Federal Theatre?" or "Dakota wants Shakespeare", and I realize that somehow we must get our federal companies out to these districts. To do this we shall have need of rulings from the Works Progress Administration and from the United States Treasury; of cooperation with civic and educational bodies; of an adventuring spirit from our directors, designers, and actors. Only by drawing on all these sources and resources can we go forward in the creation of a nationwide Federal Theatre.

• FEDERAL THEATRE

The truck in the top picture carries an entire production and serves as a stage as well. In the middle photograph, the stage and audience seats are in place, while the lower photograph shows a night performance under way.

DALLAS, TEXAS



UNDER CANVAS •

That Tent Show in Texas

by Curtis Somers-Peck
Assistant to the State Director, Texas

■ Summer comes early here in Texas, and as long ago as May 10th, the Dallas "tent show" unit of the Federal Theatre began its schedule of open air performances in the city parks. This unique playhouse on wheels, sponsored by the City of Dallas Recreation Department, has already become established as one of the most popular producing units developed by Charles Meredith, State Director of the Federal Theatre here in Texas, and unquestionably is our best good will-builder for community effort and contact with other WPA organizations.

For the information of Federal Theatre directors elsewhere, here is a brief factual description of our set-up:

The unit's equipment includes a one and one-half ton truck with a portable stage, completely covered, with scenery, properties, and stage lighting. At present the floor of the truck forms the center section of the stage floor, the other sections being built out on each side in sections three feet wide and eighteen feet long, supported by split jacks and stringers. The stage over all is 18 feet deep and 32 feet wide. The proscenium opening is 20 feet wide and 8 feet high. We make use of regular flat scenery 8 feet in height by so painting as to overcome this lack of height. A stage rigging built with hinges and pins gives us the equivalent of a grid and a frame for skypiece and chandeliers.

The tent covering consists of a stage end and stage middle 50 feet wide. The tent is 40 feet from the front of stage middle to the back, giving us ample room back of the stage for dressing rooms which are partitioned off with canvas, and lighted. The stage middle extends out in front of the stage 15 feet, forming a shell or apron to aid acoustics. This also covers the orchestra pit. Lighting is by regular porcelain sign reflectors pulled up in front of the stage on a conduit frame extending out 4 feet just at the height of the top of the curtain, giving a very effective distribution of light. In addition to stage, tent scenery, and properties we carry on the truck folding canvas seats with seating accomodations for 400 people. The balance of seating accomodations for our amphitheatre is supplied by park seats transported by the park department, by which means we are at present able to accomodate audiences up to 2000 people.

The stage crew consists of a carpenter, electrician, property man, and painter, one of whom is the truck driver. This crew of four men set the stage complete, ready to use in one hour's time, and can strike it after the performance in 30 minutes.

Our present schedule, covering all the parks of Dallas as well as some outlying points and CCC camps, comprises two unit shows playing alternately. One is a play of three acts, comedy type, calculated to reach the general audience and is directed by B. M. Goff, a tent show operator of 25 years' experience.

The other unit is a combined puppet and variety show, featuring Punch and Judy and a puppet Hansel and Gretel, manipulated by people drawn from the N. Y. A. under assignment to our project. These puppet shows are constructed and produced under the supervision of Bennedetta Collie, who learned the art in London and Johannesburg, South Africa. On this program appears a Negro quartet and a musical act drawn from the Federal Music Project, an acrobatic act, and two dancing acts, developed by Miss Collie. Mr. Goff acts as master of ceremonies. An orchestra of eight, drawn from the Federal Music Project, accompanies both shows.

Questionnaires are distributed to every audience, making them official critics, and the results of these returns are being compiled daily, forming a very interesting and useful record. Of course, all admissions are free.

We have bookings three times a week, and it is apparent from inquiries that most of the intervening dates as far as we can possibly fill them will be taken up.

●The cast limbers up

Mary Morrison, Experimental Theatre; Roslyn Harvey, Children's Theatre; Marjorie Brown, Popular Price Theatre; Marga Herdegn, German Theatre.

PROGRAM NOTES : : : NEW YORK

by Pierre de Rohan

■ At last a Federal Theatre play with a point of view has been produced in New York. No longer can it be said that we are afraid to take a stand for or against anything. Bravely, unhesitatingly, the Experimental Theatre has come out in favor of abolition.

Battle Hymn is the anti-slavery document offered by the 63rd Street group, and, in all fairness, it really does not rate such sarcasm. While its story is that of John Brown, rebel hero of the '50s, its implications are brand new 1936 models, and its authors concern themselves much more with implications than with story. Herein lies the play's greatest weakness, but its strength as valid theatre is much more important than its weakness as a narrative vehicle. John Mason Brown described it succinctly and eloquently in the New York Post:

"Each of the three acts is preceded by a prologue, in which an expositor and a chorus tell of the drawing together of the rival forces for the struggle of the Civil War. Here Mr. Blankfort and Mr. Gold take shrewd and eloquent advantage of evident parallels, showing how battle cries now rising were raised in those days when armed men turned against constituted authority in the name of freedom. They make particularly effective use of the uproar of denunciation created by the Dred Scott decision, when the Supreme Court was upbraided in a fashion not yet heard in our milder day. They let Lincoln speak and Lincoln was not tolerant on the subject of the nine robed old men who upheld slavery."

The New York Times called it "an earnest drama" and the Home News said that "the biblical poetry that was always on John Brown's lips has been woven reverently into the warp and woof of this drama".

I felt that Michael Blankfort and Michael Gold, the authors, were a bit too concerned with impressing upon the audience the similarities of the issues in the anti-slavery crusade and those facing the present generation. This was as unnecessary as "Please be advised" on an eviction notice, and detracted definitely from the narrative quality of what was, after all, a narrative play.

Battle Hymn was splendidly cast and uni-

● Scene from *Battle Hymn*

formly well acted. Its direction, however, was uneven, rising to exalted heights in the extra-curtain interludes and failing frequently to focus the story in scenes where groups and movement were demanded by the script.

Advance ticket sales have caused the run of this play to be extended indefinitely.

◆

Of *Class of '29* it cannot be said that its problems are those of the past. Its theme, as Brooks Atkinson pointed out in the New York Times, is "....unemployment, which is the reason for the WPA's existence, and the authors have applied it to a group of lads who graduated from college in the year of the great disillusion.... *Class of '29* fits in very neatly with the present New Deal program. It is worth doing under WPA auspices if only to suggest that the thinking of young college students is very intimately influenced by the treatment they receive at the hands of business and government. If they are jobless after seven wretched years, the burden of the proof does not rest on their shoulders."

The Brooklyn Citizen called it "a first-rate bit of reporting," and Burns Mantle in the Daily News said: "It is well acted and has been soundly directed. The dialogue is above the Broadway average."

Of course I would never admit this publicly, but since this discussion is strictly among ourselves, I was somewhat disappointed in *Class of '29* because it ended right where it began -- in frustration -- without conclusion or even a hint of that quality known as determinism. Beaten down by poverty and unemployment, one of its chief protagonists commits suicide while another envies his fate. Surely no such doctrine of resignation has a place in a theatre made up of men and women whose only present consolation is a determined belief that wrong *can* be righted, that man *can* create and control destiny.

I ought to add, and do hasten to add, my belief that this absence of a definite point of view was due to the authors' lack of experience rather than to their lack of convictions. Their play contains some of the best writing of the year and shows unquestioned evidence of a desire to deal honestly with the pressing problems of the day. With a little rewriting, this would be not only a good play but perhaps a great play. On this basis I urgently recommend it to Federal Theatre directors in other cities.

Every critic agreed that the acting and direction of this third production of the Popular Price Theatre was flawless. Its run had been extended three times when this was written.

◆

To me, W. H. Auden's poetic satire, *The Dance of Death,* was the most interesting new play produced in New York in the third phase of our program. Combining as it does, poetry, dance, song, pantomime, choric speech and pat-

● Cooperation Backstage at *Class of '29;* One Member of the Cast Scrubs the Back of Another

terned movement all implemented by social content, this is truly a theatre piece in the spirit of the times. Unfortunately, however, it could not find an audience in 1936 New York. Seven of every ten who saw it went away puzzled by its kaleidoscopic nose-thumbing. Even the professional critics appeared to be a bit uncertain.

The reason for this bewilderment and lack of response lies in part in the inescapable truth that forms of thinking are a reflection in the consciousness of the social formations through which, at the moment, a people is collectively passing. The path to understanding is not a straight and unbroken line, but a progressively wavering graph, like the fever chart of a consumptive. And when a whole social system is in regress, psychological retrogression is inevitable, even for those who are most intelligently perceptive. No wonder New York could not understand this satirical expose of a class that commits suicide by suffocation. A year, or two years from now, its reception will be different.

But lack of general appreciation does not mean that the play is any the less worthy, or that it was badly produced. Each performer of the Poetic Theatre cast brought a fresh and distinctive individuality to participation in a scheme which was essentially original and essentially valuable. There were certain phases of the direction with which I could quarrel -- contrasting movement in parallel horizontal planes, for example, does not indicate opposition in the theatre of today -- but on the whole this job was well done too. And as for Clair Leonard's score, it captured and intensified the spirit of the play in every mood, and provided clear-cut rhythm patterns, both simplified and mechanized, for the chorus (which is also the play's hero) and for the solo dancer. In only one department was the production below standard: the costumes failed utterly to match the imaginative quality of the play.

◆

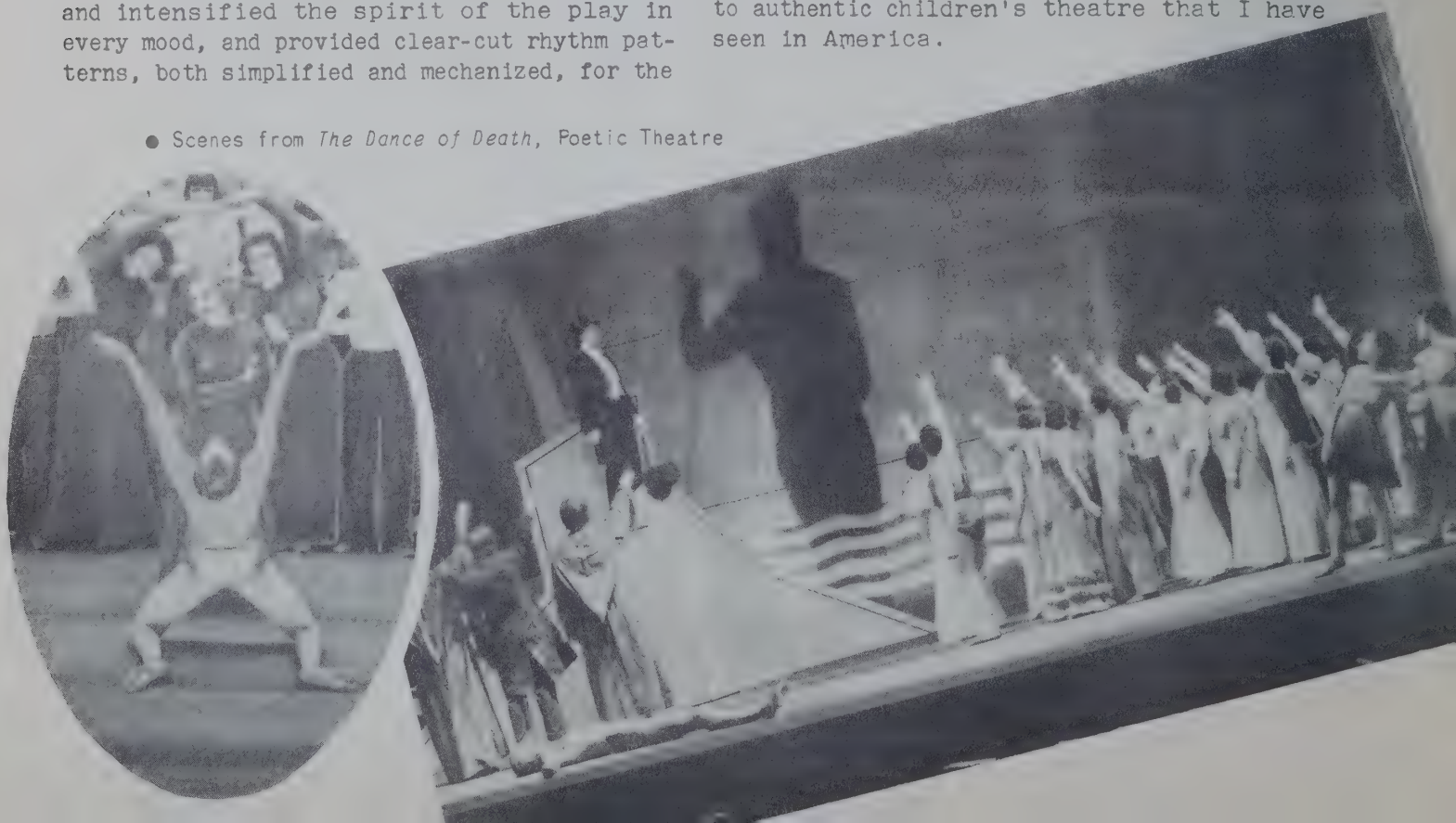
Most delightfully entertaining of the new Federal Theatre plays and most enthusiastically received by the press and public was *The Emperor's New Clothes*, presented by the Children's Theatre under the direction of Jack Rennick. Charlotte Chorpenning wrote the play, based on a Hans Christian Andersen story. Abel Plenn supervised and Turner Bullock directed it.

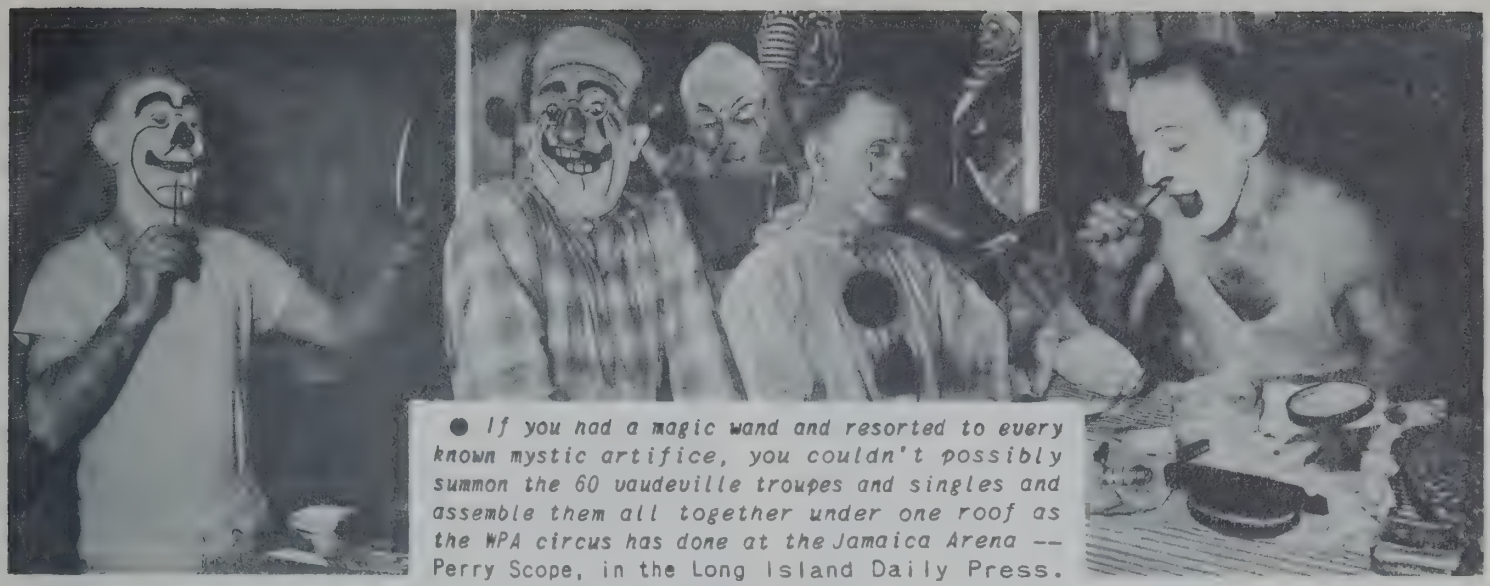
Writing in the New York Herald Tribune, Marguerite Tazelaar called it "a fairy tale nicely fashioned for a young audience and staged with fitting illustration....performed imaginatively by an adult cast which brings out proper light and shade."

The New York American called it "one of the most charming productions of a playgoer's season....pretty, steady and sheer delight.... a lively, playful and comical tale, all done with imagination that provides for juveniles every bit of color, tomfoolery and exaggeration that the occasion demands."

Employing a technique more than a little remindful of Natalia Satz's, Mr. Bullock directed the story for the most part in grotesque realism. In one episode, the entrance of the villagers, he abandoned this for a rather inept stylization, but quickly returned to his original scheme. The acting was excellent and the general effectiveness of the play unassailable. This was the nearest approach to authentic children's theatre that I have seen in America.

● Scenes from *The Dance of Death*, Poetic Theatre





● *If you had a magic wand and resorted to every known mystic artifice, you couldn't possibly summon the 60 vaudeville troupes and singles and assemble them all together under one roof as the WPA circus has done at the Jamaica Arena* -- Perry Scope, in the Long Island Daily Press.

There Were No Elephants On Relief

BUT 400,000 CHILDREN HAVE ENJOYED THE FEDERAL THEATRE CIRCUS ANYWAY

● by Anthony Buttitta

■ More than 400,000 children of greater New York have been thrilled by the death-defying feats of aerialists, trick cyclists and tight-wire walkers; have laughed and guffawed at the antics of 40 clowns -- from the world's smallest scaramouche to the tallest -- and have sung to the music of the biggest (positively!) circus band in the world, all part of the WPA Circus, a division of the Federal Theatre Project for New York City.

Organized at the beginning of the project, the circus gave its first performance on October 17, 1935, at the 2nd Naval Battalion Armory, Brooklyn. Up to May 1, 1936, it had played 106 times, to audiences totaling well over half a million -- counting adults.

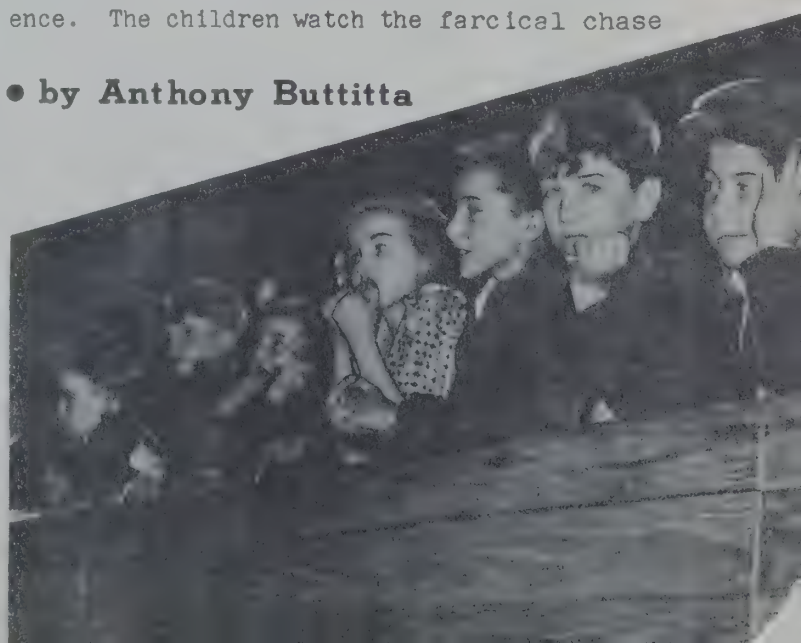
But adults hardly count, as far as this unit of Federal Theatre is concerned. It was created for the youngest generation, and has on its program everything the youthful entertainment seeker expects of a circus. Everything, that is, except wild animals. But the absence of tigers, elephants and giraffes, wild men from Borneo and glass-eating freaks is scarcely noticed by the children. Most of them have never seen a circus; but even for those who have, the 60 acts in the three-ring show are more than enough to keep them from missing the roar of the jungle beasts and the cracking whips of the trainers.

"The only reason we don't have elephants in this show is that none were on relief", Hallie Flanagan, national director of the Federal Theatre Project, said recently. Two trained ponies, a dozen dancing dogs and a pair of monkeys -- the property of certain performers on the project whose acts they constitute -- furnish enough animal interest in the show.

Asked if he missed the wild beasts, a 7-year-old Bronx boy replied, "I've seen the big stiffs at the zoo till I'm sick. I like the clowns lots better. They're the fun." Another boy answered that this was his first circus and that he was having plenty of fun with the clowns.

Clowns. That's the main attraction of the two and a half hour show. The two boys knew what they were talking about. Forty clowns -- many of them former big-top headliners on the major circuits here and abroad -- dance and tumble and buffoon in a series of walk-around interludes. From time to time, they come into the arena to take the show from the aerialists and acrobats, and the youngsters raise their ten thousand voices, stand up and applaud wildly, uniformly, like audiences in screen animated cartoons.

Before the three-ring show starts, a clown cop chases a red-headed vagrant around the arena, down the aisles and through the audience. The children watch the farcical chase



with laughter and applause. Losing the cop, the clown returns to the arena to continue his pantomime act. The cop comes on the scene, sneaking up to the clown with a club. The youngsters warn the clown, who pretends not to understand. They scream as the cop reaches him, and go into an uproar of mirth when he socks the clown with the club.

There are more than a half dozen clown acts in the show, and the children enjoy them all. The clowns enter the arena, juggling in mock artistry balls, pots, chinaware. One of them comes on with a tall pole on which is a trayful of cups and saucers. A group of clowns, jumping and tumbling around him, try to make him spill the tray. Finally it does begin to fall -- right on the children's heads But the tray and the china are fastened to the pole. Relieved, the children laugh and applaud. The clowns have pulled a fast one on them.

The band leader and his 60 men, dressed in brilliant red uniforms, also take a personal interest in their youthful audiences. Their repertory is made up of numbers that the children know and can sing. Following the national anthem, which brings them to their feet, the band goes into a familiar piece. The audience start singing the words and keeping time with their feet. The leader directs them in the singing, with a prancing clown to help him. In a few minutes the house is full of song and rhythm. A little girl steps into the arena and starts dancing. One number, especially, always brings their ten thousand voices together into a riot of mirth, song and applause. It is *The Music Goes 'Round and Around.*

One thousand orphans and underprivileged children of Queens laughed and cheered at a special performance for them in Jamaica, where the circus played 17 performances in three weeks. As guests of Lloyd Rose, president of The Arena, and of the WPA circus and its performers, they not only saw the show free, but ate all the peanuts and popcorn they could put away. The children came in busses from a number of nurseries, orphan homes and other institutions, including the Police Athletic League of the Jamaica Crime Prevention Bureau.

At the 258th Field Artillery Armory -- the largest in the world -- 14,000 children attended a matinee of the circus. This was not only the largest audience for any WPA show, but perhaps the largest group of children ever to attend a circus performance. Of this number, 8000 were from the many settlement houses of the city. The WPA Recreation Department arranged for their transportation on special busses. Throughout the show, the children were furnished with free peanuts and popcorn. They were returned to their various institutions without a single mishap. Police consider this a safety record of distinction.

Youngsters of East Harlem turned out from a radius of 50 blocks for the matinees at the Star Casino. A group of children on their way discovered that there were trained dogs on the train. They saw a man with three old suitcases, with holes punched in the sides. A bark and a series of yelps revealed the presence of the dogs. They asked the man what he was doing with them in the cases. He explained that dogs had to be carried that way since the WPA circus had no special trains.

Were they thrilled and full of questions! They were still asking them when they walked

out of the station, closely huddling around the trainer. They didn't want to get out of his sight. As the man opened his cases and let the dogs -- barking and jumping -- out on leashes, the children started playing with them. They told the trainer that it wasn't fair for little dogs to have to travel in old suitcases. He let them play with the dogs as they walked toward the Casino.

As they talked and played along, one of the older youths asked the trainer if everything for the show was moved the same way.

"Well, not exactly. My pal brings his monkeys like this, but the ponies are moved by truck. Most of the equipment for the performers comes by trucks and vans. We travel like everybody else. But it's nothing like it used to be. I don't suppose any of you are old enough to remember the old days --"

Not even 10-year-olds remembered.

"Moving a circus in the old days was real adventure," the trainer continued. "We used to pull into a town about dawn, a whole train load, thirty, forty cars, full of animals, performers, tents and equipment. A space was cleared off at the outer edge of town, tents shot up, animals were unloaded. Boys and girls like you came around to see the animals. They'd sit around everywhere -- on tracks, roofs, boxcars. Then the parade, the show in tents that reached the sky, and sometimes, a cry of 'Hey, Rube!' -- those were the days of the sawdust trail --"

They wanted to know about Rube. He told them.

Besides dogs, clowns and the biggest band in the world, the WPA show offers some thrilling acts by aerialists, cyclists, acrobats and other stunt performers. The children are invariably amazed when the "strongest woman in the world" bends a seven-foot iron rod into a double spiral with the ease of pulling apart a paper clip. The pyramid-building act of the Arabs, five high into the ropes and framework of the arena, brings sighs of relief as the acrobats jump to the floor in safety. They are fascinated by the tight-wire acts of a trio and the feats of a daredevil cyclist. A series of other acts -- the aerial web, Indian roping, triple bar, hand-balancing, the single and double trapeze -- thrill and intrigue New York's future citizens.

From October to February, no admission fee was charged by the circus. Since that time

the children have been charged ten cents, excepting at benefit performances. The money is forwarded to Washington to supplement the appropriation so that the circus may be prolonged. The admission charge has not made the show any the less popular, for thousands of children continue to attend. Repeat performances have been booked at the Star Casino, the New York Coliseum, the 212th Regiment Armory, the Ridgewood Grove Stadium and many other arenas and auditoriums.

Though the paramount aim of the project is to rehabilitate unemployed circus performers, many of whom are former $1000-a-week artists, giving a real show to children who cannot afford the annual Madison Square Garden circus is an aim almost as important. The circus is providing professional entertainment for hundreds of thousands of youngsters who are not a profitable audience for the commercial circus. For ten cents these children can see a two and a half hour show by real showmen who take a personal interest in them.

Of a personnel of 300, more than half are performers. The remainder are stagehands, ushers, managers, supervisors, agents and "twenty-four men". It is their job to check over all arrangements and details, at the last minute, to see that the show can go on.

CATALOGUING THE WORLD'S PLAYS

by Rosamond Gilder

Director of Research, National Project

The word research has a quiet, academic sound quite misleading in relation to that liveliest of dramatic adventures, the Federal Theatre. Since the moment the Bureau of Research and Publication first hung out its impressively labeled shingle it has been bombarded with clamourous and impatient requests not only for new scripts, as detailed in a former article, but also for produced plays. "Please give us at once suggestions for a classic repertory, for CCC camp plays, for Negro theatre plays, for children's, marionette, one-act, experimental, historical, American and foreign language theatres. All these plays must be clean, vigorous, funny, exciting, good box-office, actor-proof, easy to stage and if possible, rent free. Please answer by return air mail, telephone or telegraph. Look lively and be sure the cast does not call for actors we haven't got, stage facilities not yet acquired, directorial problems still unsolved or properties Procurement won't buy. At once! Hurry!! Quick!!!"

In response to these and similar desperate cries, research workers are dispatched to libraries armed with a standard report form, with specific instructions, with suggestions for the more recondite studies demanding detailed work. Their findings are brought back, corrected, checked, typewritten or mimeographed and dispatched to the inquirer, perhaps not by return mail, but as quickly as possible.

The original plan of the Bureau included as a major enterprise the building up of a giant loose-leaf catalogue of plays more complete than any existing bibliography and cross-indexed in such a way as to make available a vast amount of information constantly needed for play selection. All the questions in the above synthetic demand and all the innumerable queries that pour in daily by letter and telegram, by telephone and personal visits could eventually be answered by reference to the completed play catalogue.

Does a director want plays for men only, plays of historic interest, plays dealing with labor problems, domestic life, war and peace? Does he want plays with one, three or sixteen sets, plays for outdoor theatres or plays for schools and parish houses? The subject index of the play catalogue will provide titles, one or a hundred as the case may be. The catalogue itself will contain a summary of the play, including factual information as to cast and sets, author and agent, publisher and price, a description of the leading characters, a synopsis and a note on production. With the play catalogue complete, specific questions can and will be answered by "return mail!"

But Federal Theatre could not wait for the completion of this master catalogue. For six months, research workers have been turning out lists of suggested plays for immediate use, while the catalogue has grown steadily in the process. Approximately 1300 play analyses are already completed, and the count grows daily. Beginning with the list of Christmas plays, prepared under pressure before the holidays, suggestions for repertory and selected play lists have come out as fast as mimeographing facilities and the supply of paper allowed. On the back cover of this bulletin the lists now available are enumerated. Besides these, suggestions for specific production units have been prepared from time to time.

As the program progressed the research tended to center more and more on the American scene, with entertaining results in the unearthing of what seems to have been the first comic opera in America -- *The Disappointment* - a farce comedy with music, printed in 1767 but never actually produced because it satirized certain Philadelphia worthies of the day and was firmly censored before it saw the foot-

lights. The original music for all but three of the songs in this play was found by a musician on the project who filled in the gap by writing appropriate airs for the missing numbers. This music has been printed on the Multilith in booklet form and with a mimeographed script of the play is available to Federal Theatre producers in search of something different in Americana.

Another item in Americana is a script which brings together a number of nineteenth century vaudeville turns in an "American Museum" show under the leadership of the mighty Barnum himself. The Jarley Waxwork idea, with the living mermaid doing a *pas seul*, a take-off of the dime novel "Westerns" of the day, a phoney presidential election, and other relics of the age of innocence in showmanship are woven into an evening's entertainment, well seasoned with the sentimental patriotic songs, music and words authentically of the period.

The whole picture of the American drama is being worked out by groups specializing in various periods, one group working from the beginnings to about 1875, and including, beside the main current of the theatre, specific studies in certain fields, such as plays on and about American Indians, plays concerning historic and legendary American figures, early one-act plays, and unusual early melodramas. From 1875 on, an intensive, day-by-day chronology of plays produced in New York is being prepared. This will stop at the point where Burns Mantle takes up the story, but for the period between Brown and Odell and Mantle it will prove an invaluable guide. The period after 1900 is to have a somewhat different treatment. The group working on this important phase of the American dramatic development has analyzed hundreds of plays from the viewpoint of their regional qualities and their social comment. The beginnings and growth of regional drama, reflecting the differing flavor and quality of the various sections of the country, are illustrated in a selected list of plays. At the same time the increasing social consciousness of American playwrights is studied and presented by the careful selection and analysis of a series of outstanding plays. The idea has been to let the plays themselves illustrate the point, and the resulting booklet will take the form of a succession of play analyses, backed by a longer list of plays bearing on the same subjects, annotated to bring out their regional and social significance.

The European theatre is represented in the catalogue by analyses of a large number of plays, while research in specific fields is being carried on by writers familiar with the languages of the various countries involved. Studies are being made of Icelandic drama, bringing to light little known material of high calibre, of modern Greek drama, of Russian, Hungarian, Spanish and German plays with a view to finding material for translation and use on the project, and of rounding out the bibliographical record: Several plays have already been translated and several are in production.

In addition to the research in plays, other lines of work directly related to the activities of the Federal Theatre as a whole are under way: studies of European national theatres, their methods and technique; research in the location of theatre material in New York libraries and museums; the indexing of theatre magazines; preliminary work on a project for research in stage design; research in vaudeville material; a bibliography of music for Shakespeare's plays; extensive work on material for marionette theatres, including the writing of several marionette plays; research on classic and Elizabethan theatres for a project which is building models of ancient theatres.

A whole section of the Bureau has been devoted to the study of non-royalty plays (exclusive of the classics). All organizations using play material on a non-royalty basis -- Boy Scouts, religious organizations, civic and community groups, schools, camps and so forth -- have been consulted concerning their best material, and a master card index of some 2500 titles exists to date. All plays are checked as to their source and the recommendations they have received, some 1100 books of plays having been studied by a group of play readers. From all these sources lists of recommended non-royalty plays will be compiled.

One worker, specializing in pageantry, has already been sent into the field to work on pageant problems, and is compiling a pageant list and guide for community workers, to which will be added a bibliography of books on production for workers in the school and recreational field.

Taken altogether, research on the Federal Theatre Project is among the livelier forms of immediate service to a nation-wide theatre, with more variety of productions to its credit than any other single theatre organization has ever known.

• • •

This is the second in a series of papers on the Bureau of Research and Publication. The next will describe Play Rental Service and other functions.

CURTAIN CALLS BY MAIL

• I would like to express my appreciation of the fine work that is being done in the presentation of plays at the University of Southern California under the auspices of the Federal Theatre Project. I attended both *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* and *The School for Wives*. Both productions were beautifully staged, beautifully directed, and beautifully acted. I think that all of you should feel that you are engaged in a highly commendable enterprise and one that deserves the wholehearted support of the community. -- Ray K. Immel, Director, School of Speech, University of Southern California, Los Angeles.

• In behalf of the officers and company of 1227, I wish to express our appreciation of the splendid troupe who played before us Friday evening. The color and liveliness they brought to the barrenness of camp life have quickened the dramatic interest of our men to a realization of their own possibilities, a result much to the liking of us who are charged with morale building in the camps. -- Daniel J. O'Connor, Educational Advisor, Co. 1227, CCC, Williamstown, N.Y.

• As one of the "taxpayers" whose "money" is being "squandered" for various relief projects I wish to say that I entirely approve of the WPA theatre project. It is giving the unemployed actors and actresses something to keep up their interest in their profession, as well as supporting them in time of need. It is putting plays on the stage in towns that have not seen a play for years, and giving boys and girls who have no opportunity to see any form of dramatic production except the movies, a glimpse of the real three-dimensioned theatre. The selection of plays has been good and the general conduct of the project admirable. -- Samuel Eliot Morison, Professor of History, Harvard University, Boston.

• To say that the patients enjoyed your play would be putting it very mildly, in fact they were so interested and fascinated that they could have listened for hours all unconscious of the lapse of time. Once in a blue moon, we get a program like the one you presented and we feel that you had no small part in making it a night not soon to be forgotten. -- Donald Duncan, Recreation Aide, Veterans' Hospital, Los Angeles.

• I must take time out to tell you how I was impressed by your publication, *Federal Theatre*. I didn't think the effects were possible in the medium you used. -- Edward Gottlieb, News Editor, Long Island Daily Press Jamaica, New York.

• We wish you to know how much we appreciate having had the opportunity of having the Federal Players here. The student body showed their enthusiasm by vigorous applause. Many of them have spoken to me and to their teachers of their enjoying the program. -- Marshall W. Downing, Principal, North High School, Syracuse, N.Y.

• If one had paid admission to a regular theatre to see this play, he would not have felt cheated. Absurdities are constantly printed about the government program for the relief of "white collar" people, but to see a play like this ably performed, is to forget the printed ridicule and become a convert to the government's program. This program has a further benefit: the audience which sat for this play is probably one in which few persons have ever seen good acting in the legitimate theatre; and it is good for the public occasionally to see the real thing. -- Leo J. Roedl, Northeast High School, Kansas City, Mo.

• The purposes of the Federal Theatre meet my hearty approval and interest. I rejoice in the revival of interest in the spoken drama on a far-reaching scale throughout the nation. The drama had its origin as a medium of religious teaching. Again it is coming into increasing use in Christian churches as the most effective means of teaching truths of religion and life. Dramatic presentation of any theme is always one of the most powerful means of imparting it. Both for the actors and for the people from whose deepest yearnings the themes of drama have evolved it serves a great purpose as a medium of self-expression. -- Henry Clark Smith, Rector, All Saints Episcopal Church, Riverside, California.

• The members of this Company sincerely appreciate the fine performance given by your theatrical group. The comments heard in the mess hall would have warmed the hearts of your people if they could have heard them.-- J. D. Crichton, Lieut. (jg) USNR, Commanding Company 3755, CCC, Butler, Missouri.

BUREAU of RESEARCH and PUBLICATION
303 West 42nd Street, New York City

PLAY LISTS AVAILABLE

● *This material is available without charge to W.P.A. directors and supervisors and to drama leaders of tax-supported, non-profit institutions.*

CHRISTMAS PLAYS....Twenty-four plays, medieval and modern. 10 cents

CLASSIC ENGLISH PLAYS....Fourteen plays from the best Early English dramatists. 10 cents

AMERICAN, ENGLISH AND IRISH PLAYS.... Thirty representative modern plays. 10 cents

MODERN CONTINENTAL PLAYS....Thirty-two landmarks in the continental theatre. 10 cents

EARLY AMERICAN PLAYS....Three plays representative of the period before 1800. 10 cents

LITTLE KNOWN ONE-ACT PLAYS....Seven Hans Sachs plays and five Gaelic plays in modern translation and adaptation. 10 cents

CHILDREN'S PLAYS....Forty plays recommended by a group of well-known educators. 10 cents

PLAYS FOR AMATEUR PRODUCTION.... Twenty-three plays easily produced and requiring small casts. 10 cents

NEGRO PLAYS....Eleven full-length plays dealing with Negro problems. 10 cents

ONE-ACT NEGRO PLAYS.... Fifteen social and economic plays dealing with particular Negro problems. 10 cents

SIX DEGREES OF CRIME....Outline of a melodrama representative of the early 19th century theatre. 10 cents

THE DISAPPOINTMENT or *THE FORCE OF CREDULITY*.... The first comic opera in America.
Playscript, complete with dialogue, business, music and lyrics. $1.00
Preliminary report, outlining the story and listing the music. 10 cents

REPORTS OF PLAY-READING DIVISION

● *If any director on the Federal Theatre Project has not received reports on the following plays, write at once for those you want. Address Elizabeth Hull, Bureau of Research and Publication, 303 West 42nd Street, New York.*

American Wing....by Talbot Jennings
More Died Than Men....by Paul Treichler
World Series....by Robert Ewing
The Eagle's Young....by Elise Jorard
The Happy Mountain....by Louis Walinsky
Kykunkor....by Asadata Dafora Horton
One Angry Heart....by Stanley P. Young
Anti-Climax...by Harold Johnsrud
Hokusai....by Gustav Eckstein
49 Dogs in a Meat House..by E.P. Conkle
The List of Benefits.... by Yury Olesha
Windmills of Manhattan....by Judith and David Bublick
Ghost Town.... by Philo Higley
Nor All Your Tears....by Kate Horton
Cat Into Man.... by Paul Eldridge
When I Think.... by Maxwell Selser
The Princess Runs Away....by Harry B. Smith and Geoffrey O'Hara
Brigham Young....by John McGee and Bernard Szold
Faint Perfume....by Zona Gale
No Abiding Place.... by Eleanor Flexner
Age of Gold.... William Mahl
Queen of Kings....by Charles Bruce Millholland
Ancient Gods....by Dorothy Nichols
John Henry.... by Frank B. Wells
The Spider....by Fulton Oursler and Lowell Brentano
Rock of Gibraltar....by Oriane Atkinson and Margaret Watson
That Side of Jordan.... by Herb Meadow